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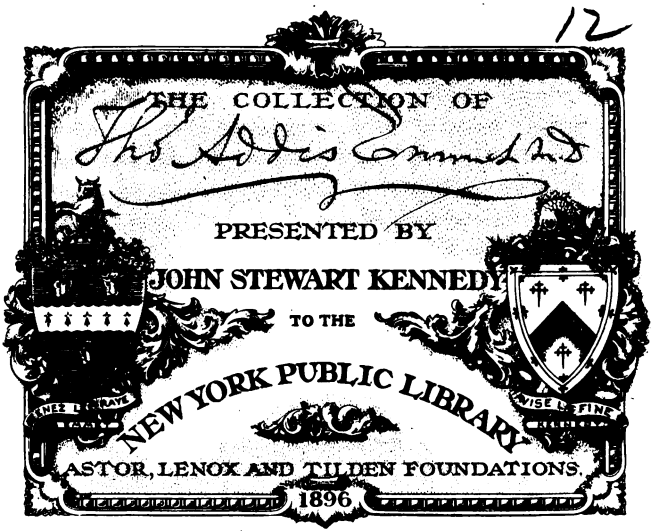
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WIVES AND MOTHERS

IN THE OLDEN TIME

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Wives and Mothers

IN THE OLDEN TIME

FROM FRENCH, ITALIAN, AND LATIN AUTHORS

BY

Mary Elizabeth LADY HERBERT of Lea.

'He only knows aright how to live in the world,
that hath learnt to die to the world'—GURNALL

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PREFACE.

SENECA, speaking of the idlers of his day, writes:—'Almost their whole lives are spent in doing nothing; and the whole in doing nothing to the purpose.'

Does this severe criticism apply to people in these days? I am afraid it does; and especially to the young of both sexes. But in writing these Lives I have thought only of women; and of the great apostolate which is set before them, and of the immense work each and all might do for God, if they would.

Paula and Olympias were ladies of high birth and position in the world, living very much under the same circumstances as ourselves. How was it that their influence was so great? that they were such powerful instruments for good?

Was it not from the earnestness, the thoroughness of their lives? their abhorrence of everything frivolous and luxurious? their realisation of the

value of time, and the need of employing every moment of it for eternity?

The keynote of their lives was the love of God, and its fruit was love to all around them, but especially to the poor.

I do not say that there are not such women now, but I say that their number is lamentably small, and that I see very few *young* women willing to follow in their steps. Pleasure, dress, and luxury absorb their days and nights; they have no thought for the suffering they could relieve, the sorrows they could soothe, the sickness they could alleviate; even their ordinary home duties are looked upon as irksome. Then they marry, and the same round of self-pleasing begins; the same want of energy and self-denial, the same frivolity and waste of time, even if nothing worse. How can such women influence the society about them for good? For in all ages it is women who have regenerated society or degraded it, debased or raised it. 'Men,' writes a clever author, 'are what women make them.'

Let them see their mothers, wives, or sisters absorbed in interests worthy of the name: in the supervision of their households and their homes; in the temporal and spiritual welfare of the perishing millions around them; in the care of the sick, the

orphans, the sad and the sorrowful; in the faithful discharge of the duties of property, with all its manifold calls on their patience, their temper, and their time: and they will acquire a respect and reverence for such women, and feel that God has not put them into the world to eat and drink, amuse themselves and die; but that He has given to each a mission and a work, and that on the fulfilment of that work will depend their happiness both here and hereafter.

MARY ELISABETH HERBERT.

38 CHESHAM PLACE, LONDON:
August 1876.

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THE

HISTORY OF SANTA PAULA.

TRANSLATED FROM HER LIFE

BY

M. L'ABBÉ F. LAGRANGE,

VICAR-GENERAL OF ORLEANS.

'St. Paula! that sweet and lovely violet who was so beautiful a sight in the garden of the Church.'—ST. FRANCIS OF SALES. *Letter of 3rd April*, 1611.

B

PREFACE OF TRANSLATOR

TO

THE SECOND EDITION.

THE first edition of this work being exhausted, I have been asked to publish a second, which should bring it within the reach of a greater number of readers. This has been done, not by shortening, but by omitting one of the lives; which I hope, however, will appear later in a second volume, with a new and equally interesting one.

When I first obtained from M. l'Abbé Lagrange the permission to translate his beautiful life of St. Paula into English, a short summary of this biography had appeared from another hand, with which I was unwilling to interfere. That little volume, however, had a limited circulation; so that I thought the time was come when I might give the English-reading public a complete translation of a work which in many ways is so valuable an addition to our hagiographies. For the life of this noble Roman lady is full of instruction to ourselves, and especially to the wives, mothers, and daughters of the present century. In the touching letter written by the venerable Bishop of Orleans to the Author, and inserted in the preface of the original work, he speaks in the following manner of the valuable example St. Paula affords to women of every class: 'I felt, while reading this life—so full of holiness and good works, and in this respect so different from the worldly, empty, and useless existences of so many amongst us—how much St. Paula owed, even in her virtues, to that large, liberal Roman and Christian education which she had received, and to the care with which she had studied both Latin and Greek literature. One sees clearly to what an extent solid mental culture

benefits the soul, and how women, whose mission is so noble, and whose influence is often so decisive, need a strong and solid education to escape the frivolity and waste of their lives, and to make them capable of fulfilling their grave and serious duties. In this respect St. Paula's life gives a grand lesson to great ladies in the world. To become to their husbands, in all things, that help and stay which God meant them to be; to form the minds, hearts, consciences, and characters of their children; to rule their households with discretion and firmness, and yet with kindness,—for such a task, certainly, a frivolous, ignorant, vulgar mind, or a weak, narrow, superficial, self-indulgent, indolent one, with frivolous tastes and useless occupations, is not sufficient. A strong character and high principles are needful. But to produce such, the soil must be prepared by careful culture and a solid education. On this foundation the social edifice can be raised; without it, everything fails; and we witness the ruin of the happiest natural gifts of mind and heart, which sink into the mediocrity of a miserable, purposeless existence. If St. Jerome had not found in St. Paula that fine mind, those high reasoning powers, and that taste for solid instruction which characterised her, he never would have been able to train her to the attainment of those noble virtues, those fruitful labours, that life at once so earnest and so holy, of which you have given us such a beautiful picture.'

More than ever are these lessons needful to English ladies of the present day. Among us, as amongst the Romans in the few years which preceded the decline and fall of the Empire, habits of excessive luxury and extravagance—disguised under the specious title of the 'worship of the beautiful'—effeminate and sensual indulgences of all kinds, are steadily gaining ground in every class of society. We know how all this ended in Rome: in what utter humiliation, disaster, and ruin; and yet we fail to see the consequence to ourselves, or to take the lesson to heart.

Will no St. Paula rise up amongst us to set the example of better things, and put before us a higher standard?

HERBERT HOUSE, BELGRAVE SQUARE:
October 1885.

CHAPTER I.

THE NOBLE ORIGIN OF ST. PAULA—HER EDUCATION—HER MARRIAGE—HER CHILDREN—HER LIFE AS A GREAT LADY IN ROME.

(347–379.)

'WERE all the members of my body to change into as many tongues, I could even then say nothing worthy of the virtue and piety of the holy and venerable Paula!'[1] Such were the words and such was the enthusiasm with which St. Jerome—that man of genius, who combined so much erudition with such sanctity, and who was for so many years a witness of her daily life—begins his biography of St. Paula, at the earnest request of her daughter Eustochium, whose sorrow he thereby hoped to calm; and then placing himself, as it were, with humble respect in the presence of God and of His angels, he continues:

'I take Jesus Christ and His saints to witness, as well as the guardian angel of this incomparable woman, that in what I am about to write I shall simply speak the truth, and my words will be inadequate to do justice to

[1] Si cuncta corporis mei membra verterentur in linguas, et omnes artus humanâ voce resonarent, nihil dignum sanctæ ac venerabilis Paulæ virtutibus dicerem.—S. Hier. *Epistola* 86, *Ad Eustochium Virginem, Epitaphium Paulæ.* We shall quote in this book St. Jerome's 'Letters' from the Benedictine Edition.

the virtues of one whom all the world honours, who is held in veneration by the whole Church; whom the choirs of virgins unite to mourn, and for whom the poor cease not to weep.' [1]

And after this preface, setting forth the great features in this life of self-sacrifice, which combined all that faith, love, and heroism could inspire, St. Jerome adds:

'Noble by birth, still more noble in sanctity; once powerful, through her great wealth, and then more illustrious in the poverty of Jesus Christ; of the race of the Gracchi and the Scipios; the heiress of Paulus Emilius, from whom she derived her name of Paula; the direct descendant of that famous Martia Papyria, the wife of the Persian conqueror, and mother of Scipio Africanus—she preferred Bethlehem to Rome, and the humble roof of a poor cottage to a gilded palace.' [2]

The life and the soul of St. Paula are contained in these words: a complete immolation of herself for the sake of a greater love. All her pride as a Roman matron, and all her riches, were laid at the feet of Jesus Christ. She thus gave the most admirable example of nobleness of mind and of moral strength; while her perfection was attained not only by a voluntary renunciation of all that the world counts dear, but by the purification of weary and protracted suffering, by many and bitter tears, and by the practice of almost superhuman charity.

[1] Testor Jesum et Sanctos ejus. . . . me quidquid dicturus sum pro testimonio dicere et minus ejus esse meritis, quam totus orbis canit, etc.—*Epitaphium Paulæ.*

[2] Nobilis genere, sed multo nobilior sanctitate; potens quondam divitiis, sed nunc Christi paupertate insignior; Gracchorum stirps, soboles Scipionum; Pauli hæres, cujus vocabulum trahit; Martiæ Papyriæ vera et germana progenies, Romæ prætulit Bethlehem.—*Ibid.*

Such was the saint whose history we are about to relate.

She was born at Rome towards the middle of the fourth century, on May 5, 347, under the reign of Constant, son of Constantine, ten years after the death of that Emperor, and when the Pope Julian sat on the throne of St. Peter. Through her mother, Blesilla (as St. Jerome told us above), she was related to the most eminent and illustrious of the Roman patricians—those noble families of Scipios and Gracchi to whom Rome owed all her greatest men, whether at home or in the field. And as if these honours were not enough, and that Providence wished to crown this child's birth with all earthly glories, the purest blood of Greece was mingled in her veins with the purest blood of Rome. In this period of history nothing was more usual than an alliance between Roman and Greek families, as the constant recurrence of Greek names in Roman genealogies proves. The father of St. Paula, Rogatus, sprang from one of the oldest of the Hellenic races; and with a pretension common enough in those days, and against which no Greek remonstrated, he even traced his descent from the ancient kings of Mycene, and included Agamemnon among his ancestors.[1] Paula therefore came from what was most noble in those two most noble races in the world; and the influence of this double origin was to be traced in the moral qualities as well as in the destiny of this noble woman, so grave in character, so brilliant in mind, so grand in soul; and whose existence, begun under an Italian sky, was to be perfected and closed under an Eastern sun.

[1] Per omnes fere Græcias usque hodie stemmatibus et divitiis ac nobilitate Agamemnonis fertur sanguinem trahere.—*Epist.* 86, *Ad Eustochium, Epitaphium Paulæ.*

St. Jerome gives us little or no details as to Paula's family, except that once he accidentally mentions that she had a brother; neither does he speak of the immense possessions of her family. He only says, in one place, that besides her domains in Italy, she had a very large property in Greece, near Actium.[1] But we know the enormous spoils which fell into the hands of these conquerors of the world; and we can judge of what must have been the riches of the Scipios and the Gracchi by what we know of other great fortunes in those days; such as that of Melania, for instance, who had whole provinces in Spain, Gaul, and Sicily; and, again, St. Paulinus of Nola, whose estates were equally vast.

'If I dwell' (writes St. Jerome) 'on her high birth and her wealth, it is not because I attach any undue importance to these temporal advantages, but because she learnt to live above them all, and to sacrifice all in a way which wins my intense admiration. The glory of Paula, in my eyes, is not to have possessed all these things, but to have laid them all at the feet of Jesus Christ.'[2]

She had one undoubted advantage, however, independently of her noble birth, and that was that her family were Christians. Her mother undoubtedly was one, and there is no reason to believe that her father was otherwise. The Roman patriciate had not readily embraced the new faith, but where it had taken root it wrought wonders. One of the first martyrs—the illustrious Flavia Domitilla—had been seized in the Emperor's palace. The Pudenzianas, the Agathas, the Cecilias, the

[1] Preface of the 'Commentary on the Epistle of Titus.'

[2] Ex quo intelligimus non laudis esse possidere divitias, sed pro Christo eas contemnere; non tumere ad honores, sed pro Dei fide eos arvipendere, etc.—*Epitaphium Paulæ.*

Agnes', were all of noble patrician families. Those families whom Christianity had conquered, and who had shed their blood so generously in the hour of persecution, had become in the fourth century the examples of every virtue. St. Jerome, in his letters, gives us a glimpse of some of them. Such was the illustrious family of the Anicia, who gave as many consuls to Rome as saints and martyrs; from whom, in later days, sprang St. Benedict and St. Gregory the Great; and who, at the time of which we are speaking, possessed women of the noble stamp of the mother and grandmother of the Virgin Demetria—Christians who cried with joy when their daughters or grand-daughters, on the very eve of contracting a wealthy marriage, came and threw themselves at their feet, declaring that they wished to devote their future lives not to an earthly but to a heavenly spouse.[1] The family of St. Paula was one of those senatorial patricians which had embraced the true faith. It is, however, certain that there were still some Pagans among them; as, for example, one Gracchus, a near relation of Paula's, who was Prefect of Rome under Gratian. This mixture in Roman families was not to be wondered at; for it was in the heart of the nobility that the greatest resistance was made to Christianity; and it was not uncommon in the fourth century to meet with the painful contrast which we find in our own troubled times, though from different causes,—that is, to see under the same roof the worshippers of Jupiter and the adorers of Jesus Christ; the father and the son being Pagans, and the mother and daughters Christians.

Rome, in fact, in those days presented an extraordinary contrast, which must have greatly struck the young Paula when she was old enough to look about her.

[1] S. Hier. *Epist.* 97, *Ad Demetriadem.*

There were two cities, in fact—the Pagan and the Christian; and Pagan Rome, as yet untouched by barbarian hordes, offered undoubtedly an imposing spectacle.

The Capitol was still crowned with the temples and statues of the heathen deities. On the Palatine stood the ancient palace of the Cæsars, with its marble porticos. At the foot of the hill the Forum, in all its grandeur; further on, separated from the Forum by the Via Sacra and the amphitheatre of Flavian, stood the great Coliseum. At the other end was the Circus and the Aqueducts of Nero; on the banks of the Tiber, Adrian's mole, and the mausoleum of Augustus—on all sides, in fact, the temples, theatres, baths, porticos, and all the other monuments of heathen luxury or superstition, proved by what deep roots Paganism still held its place in the capital of the Empire.

Nevertheless, by more than one token it was easy to see that all this Pagan grandeur would fall before a something which was more powerful still. If polytheism were still supported by tradition and custom, it was only a thing of the past, which every day was diminishing. The future was with the Church of God. Christianity was by degrees usurping the place of the old Pagan faith. The temples, though still standing, were empty; the sacrifices were despised; silence and solitude reigned in the abode of the heathen deities, while the new faith, emerging gloriously from darkness into the light of day, covered Rome with new and splendid Basilicas, filled with an eager crowd of worshippers. At the same time, Rome, deserted by the Emperors from a political necessity, veiling providential designs, seemed to have abdicated its imperial position in favour of the Christian pontiffs; and the Popes, only lately drawn from the Catacombs, and installed by Constantine in the imperial palace of the

Lateran, seemed thus to foretell who were to be the future successors of the Emperors.

This contrast, so triumphant to the Christians, was not the only one which struck the eyes of the people. Whilst from the East to the West the vigorous life of the Church, with her hierarchy of holy and powerful bishops, continually gained the day in the political struggles which the sons of Constantine foolishly evoked, Christianity itself gave birth to the noblest qualities and virtues in its followers, which were the more remarkable in Rome, side by side with the growing corruption which accelerated the decline and fall of Paganism and the Empire. The blood of the martyrs, which had been the seed of the Church, had likewise brought forth a generation of saints such as the world had never hitherto seen.

It was at this very time that Providence ordained the birth of a child who was destined to be one of the wonders of her age and century. Contemporary history and the text of St. Jerome's biography give us a minute account of the education which the little Paula received, and of the influences under which she was brought up. They combined the old Roman aristocratic spirit of the fourth century with the Christian feelings which existed in the holy families of the primitive Church; that is to say, the best condition for forming a soul to the practice of the highest virtue. There was a kind of natural affinity between these two spirits. The gravity of the old Roman manners was well allied with the austerity of the Christian virtues, and Catholic humility and sweetness happily corrected the pride and hardness of heart which were the characteristics of that patrician race.

A high sense of honour, a keen feeling of self-respect, the tradition of ancient customs—all these things were inculcated on the little Paula from her earliest years,

and had the effect of inspiring her with the greatest horror for any weakness or meanness. Of her family St. Jerome wrote :—

'Remember that in your family a woman has rarely, if ever, contracted a second marriage.'

But, however great a safeguard might be the keen sense of her dignity and of her noble blood, the feelings inspired by the Christian faith as existing in the bosom of her family were a still surer stay. It is difficult to realise in these days the strength and vividness of faith in those families who had preserved it at the price of their blood, at the moment when the persecution first ceased and before any laxity had crept in.

Whilst the old Pagan Roman lived but for this world, the Christians found in the Church a still dearer country; and the duties of their new faith, with the faithful observance of its practices, were put above and before everything else.

Paula was brought up by her mother in that spirit of love for religion, of profound aversion of anything which savoured of Paganism, and in that gravity of life which was suitable to a patrician and a Christian. Carefully guarded from evil by her own fireside, she never frequented theatres or took part in the shows of the Circus, but passed by the doors of those noisy Pagan assemblies without a moment's regret, when accompanying her mother to the Basilicas or the feasts of the Church, or to the tombs of the martyrs in the Catacombs. We all know how dear this latter devotion was to the Christians of the fourth century. In truth, the martyrs had been the conquerors, and the Christians, who reaped the fruit of their bloody combats, loved to glorify the victors.

'See,' exclaimed St. Chrysostom, 'the tombs of the martyrs! The Emperor himself kneels there, lays his

crown at their feet, and implores Heaven, through their intercession, to deliver him from all evil and to enable him to triumph over his enemies.'

The deacon (who afterwards became Pope) Damasus wrote their epitaphs in verses which have become famous to all time; while the poet Prudentius composed in their honour his poem on 'Their Crowns.'

This devotion, as I have said before, was specially dear to the Christians of Rome, and for a very good reason; there was scarcely a single Christian family in that city of martyrs who had not one near and dear to them among those valiant and glorious dead who lined the long galleries of the Catacombs. They were entered with an emotion and a respect which even in these days is shared by those who visit them. St. Jerome has related the attraction which drew him every Sunday into these holy retreats with some of his favourite companions, when he was a student at Rome, about the time of Paula's birth.[1]

Paula herself was constantly taken there by her parents. She loved to traverse the long galleries where the faith, now triumphant, had so long hidden itself from the world; to venerate the still recent traces of the martyrs' sufferings and deaths; to breathe, as it were, the perfume of their tombs; to examine the quaint pictures, the pious symbols, in which we still find the thoughts of the early Christians, their hopes of immortality, and all the expressions of the faith for which they were persecuted even to the death. And when, leaving this sacred spot, she returned homewards and saw close by the cemetery of St. Cecilia on the Appian Way[2] the

[1] 'Commentary on Ezekiel.'

[2] See Guéranger's *History of St. Cecilia and of the Appian Way*, 2nd ed. chap. iv.

gorgeous mausoleum of the Scipios, her ancestors, the sense of the vanity of all earthly things, which was one day to make her whole life heroic, arose in her mind and produced thoughts far beyond her age. The pious child would have preferred to be the virgin St. Cecilia, interred in the cemetery of St. Callixtus, than the Cecilia Metella, to whom Crassus raised the gorgeous tomb which still bears her name, and which is seen from afar; while often, in her young girl's dreams, she regretted not living in the time when she could die for the love of her Lord, Jesus Christ.

Is it necessary to add that works of charity as well as pious practices formed a large part of Paula's education? Christian charity had been too well organised in Rome by successive pontiffs not to have been taught early to this pious child; and when her mother took her to the Basilica built over the grave of St. Agnes, she did not fail to tell her of the way in which the Empress Helena, laying aside her crown, used to come there to serve and tend the poor with her own hands, or rather Jesus Christ Himself in the persons of His poor. Thus did she inspire into the heart of her little daughter that true tenderness for human misery which led her eventually to the highest pitch of devotion and self-abnegation.

This truly moral and Christian education was crowned by the serious studies which likewise formed part of the traditionary training of girls in the noble families of Rome. Independently of the Holy Scriptures, which were Paula's first study, she was also thoroughly instructed in Latin and Greek literature. She spoke both languages with ease and fluency, and was familiar with the works of the best historians, poets, and philosophers of both countries. We shall see later how useful this profane literature became to her in following out the

admirable Christian life which she afterwards embraced; and in the meantime, this careful and almost severe training of her intellectual faculties contributed more than anything else to develop the qualities which she had received from nature—a sound judgment, a strong purpose, and powers of reasoning which enabled her to hold an even balance between her inclinations and her duty.

Such was our heroine's education. She was ten years old when an event happened in the Church which must greatly have struck the imagination of the child, especially as her own mother took part in it. It was at the moment when the Arian heresy began to trouble people's minds, but it was almost unknown among the faithful in Rome, guarded as they were by apostolic traditions and the watchfulness of the sovereign pontiffs. St. Athanasius when exiled, in consequence, from Nice, had twice found shelter in this quiet and secure harbour. But then the new Emperor came to trouble the peace of the Church. The declared enemy of Athanasius, he strove to induce the Pope himself to condemn him and embrace the Arian heresy. Pope Julius and, after him, Pope Liberius protested against this imperial interference in matters of theology. But in so doing they roused the anger of the Emperor to such an extent that Rome saw, with horror and grief, her chief bishop torn from his throne and sent into exile. But she was faithful to her persecuted Pope. 'One only God, one only Christ, one only Pope!' became the cry of the people, over whom the Emperor wished to place in the pontifical chair an Arian usurper. The noble ladies of Rome were not the last to show their devotion to the illustrious exile. Constantius having come to Rome, they courageously went to him in a body and presented a petition, signed by all the Catholics

of the city, imploring the restoration of the Pope to his see. This petition was granted. The mother of St. Paula, who held the highest rank among the Roman ladies, was one of these illustrious petitioners. This was only a short time before Julian the Apostate, who had become sole master of the Empire, commenced that cruel persecution against the Church which was only arrested by his tragic death.

A stronger love for the Church, a horror of heresy and religious divisions, and a strengthening of her faith in Jesus Christ and in the divinity of Christianity, were the confused impressions left on the mind of the child by this event, which was too important not to form a subject of conversation by every fireside.

But the time was at hand when Paula, developing into a woman, was to receive from the hands of her parents a spouse who would add to the lustre of her birth and dignity by his own. The exact date of this event is unknown, but in Rome the patrician families married very early in life, and Paula could scarcely have been more than fifteen at that time. She married a young Greek named Toxotius, who was descended on the mother's side from the family of Julius, which boasted of an ancestry dating from Æneas.

> Julius a magno demissum nomen Iulo.—
> Virgil's *Æneid.*

Toxotius, unhappily, did not share in the faith of his bride. He was, like his brother—of whom we shall soon have occasion to speak—one of those last patrician families in Rome which had not yet embraced Christianity. These mixed marriages, in spite of their grave disadvantages, were not rare in the fourth century. St. Monica and Patricius, the parents of St. Augustine, were

another instance of it. In the first beginning of Christianity such unions had been tolerated, provided liberty of conscience were respected; and very often, in the words of St. Paul, 'an unbelieving husband had been sanctified by his believing wife.' We are ignorant of the political or social considerations which influenced this choice for Paula. But who shall tell the holy emotion, the purity of intention, with which, dressed, according to the custom of those days, in a tunic of pure white wool, bound with gold, and shrouded in her flowing bridal veil, this young and beautiful girl placed her trembling hand in that of Toxotius, and swore to be faithful to him until death!

On his side Toxotius does not seem to have been unworthy of the pure and nobly-born woman he had espoused; and the deep love St. Paula felt for him all her life, and the inconsolable sorrow with which she mourned his death, shows that their union was one of those which may indeed be called a happy one. God blessed it with four children, and all of them fulfilled Paula's fondest expectations. The eldest, named Blesilla, after her grandmother, although delicate in health and appearance, was richly gifted with all the qualities which command admiration and respect. Paulina, the second, though unlike Blesilla in character, and of far less brilliant talents, had a sound judgment and good sense which made her the stay of the whole family. As to the third, called, from a Greek name, Eustochium, she was a gentle, reserved, timid, modest child, like a flower which hides its sweet scent under the thick leaves. But this perfume was to shed its sweetness not only around her own home, but far beyond it—to astonish the whole world by its effects. Of Rufina, the fourth, we know but little. She only comes once into Paula's story—at

the moment of her mother's departure for the East, when we read of her as sad, silent, drowned in tears, and yet resigned. She was probably one of those good and gentle but not strong natures, who pass unknown through life, and often fall before the fruit is ripe.

We do not know what were the offices or dignities held by Toxotius in the imperial city. All we are told is that he occupied an important position, and that Paula was consequently placed in the first rank among the noble Roman matrons.

We all know what was the splendour of this sort of life, and to what a pitch, in the decline and corruption of the Empire, luxury and delicacy had arrived. Living in such an atmosphere, even Christian women in patrician families were obliged more or less to conform to it. It was true that Tertullian had launched forth certain severe denunciations against women's dress, and said that he feared 'that in the day of martyrdom a neck covered with emeralds would leave no space for the axe of the executioner.' Still, it must be allowed that Christianity has always permitted its followers liberty to dress and act according to their social position. The martyr St. Cecilia wore a silk dress, embroidered with gold, when she laid her fair head on the block; and the object of religion was to transform the Roman matron into the Christian woman, less by a change of outward appearance than by the inner feelings of mind and soul. Still, the line was somewhat difficult to draw between Roman and Pagan corruptions and what evangelical modesty imposed; and hence arose some scandals among Christian ladies in spite of the efforts of the Church. Paula, at this time of her life, did not know how to preserve herself sufficiently from the luxury and effeminacy of the day. She was carried like all the other patrician

ladies, by slaves in a golden litter, through the streets of Rome; she would not have dared to put her foot to the ground for fear of being soiled by the mud; the weight of a silk gown was too much for her; and a ray of sunshine, piercing through the thick curtains of her litter, would have seemed to burn her delicate skin.[1] Like all women of her rank, she freely used rouge and white paint, and spent many hours in the baths, which formed a necessary part of the life of every Roman lady. Her winters were passed in Rome; her summers in some beautiful villa in the country; where, surrounded by her friends and a carefully selected library, she divided her time between business and pleasure. Nevertheless, in the midst of all this luxury, Paula was known and respected by all as a woman of irreproachable character, and whose reputation was above all suspicion. No voice in Rome was ever lifted up against her, neither in the gossiping and often malevolent society in which she lived, nor among people of any other class.[2] On the contrary, she was constantly cited as a Roman matron of the old stamp, who had maintained, by her severe chastity and inviolable honour, the credit of the Republic; and when mothers would give a model to their daughters they pointed to Paula.[3] Something of this well-deserved reputation might be attributed to her old and noble blood; but far more was owing to the inspirations of her faith. It was this guide which saved Paula from

[1] Vivente Toxotio, sæculo serviebant. Nam quæ immunditias platearum ferre non poterant, quæ eunuchorum manibus portabantur, et inæquale solum molestius transcendebant, quibus serica vestis oneri erat, et solis calor incendium, etc.—*Epist.* 54, *Ad Pammachium.*

[2] Ita se gessit, ut nunquam de illâ etiam maledicorum quidquam auderet fama confingere.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[3] In castitate, etiam cum sæcularis esset, omnium Romæ matronarum exemplum fuit.—*Ibid.*

perishing in the vortex of luxury and pleasure in which she was plunged; and if, during these brilliant and happy years of her life, the young wife of Toxotius had not always the maxim of the apostle before her eyes, as to 'using these things without abusing them,'[1] the reverses which she soon experienced, and the austere penance with which she atoned for her past luxuriousness, were a superabundant expiation for the indulgences of her youth. Paula was not only a woman of unblemished reputation, but to this virtue St. Jerome adds another: she was of a profoundly Christian spirit, and that was entirely opposed to the Roman. One of the greatest perils of worldly lives arises from pride. It was, as it were, ingrained in the Roman patrician. And to what a degree this inordinate pride, fed by a life of luxury and pleasure, had perverted the souls of women; how it had transformed their natural kindness and sensitiveness into hardness and barbarity—to what, in fact, it had brought the Pagan ladies, with their revolting assumptions of superiority, their cruelty, mingled with the refinement of luxury, their insolent words, their fierce passions and furious rages, venting themselves in murderous acts of impatience towards the unhappy slaves occupied in their toilets, Juvenal, among others, has portrayed in verses which have become immortal.[2]

But Christianity had, in Paula, made all this give way to gentleness, sweetness, and goodness, especially

[1] Qui utuntur hoc mundo, tanquam non utantur.—*Ad Corinthios I* St. Francis of Sales, in his commentary on this passage, writes:—'Let every one use the things of this world according to his station, but in such a manner as, not setting his affections upon anything, he may be as ready and free to serve God as if he used none of them.'—*Introduction à la Vie Dévote*, Part III. chap. xxxix.

[2] Satire VI.

towards her inferiors. St. Jerome depicts her character in a few touching words, which reveal the beautiful effect of Christianity on this noble old Roman mind. He writes:—

'This wealthy and high-born daughter of the Scipios was the tenderest, most gentle, and most benevolent of women towards the poor, the little ones, and, above all, the slaves of her household.' And he adds: 'Her charity was so great, as well as the self-command she exercised on all occasions, that she never lost patience with the most odious people, and bore with the greatest sweetness and good temper the indiscreet bores who pestered her with their pretensions or ill-advised compliments, although they were peculiarly distasteful to her.'

The natural nobility of her soul, and still more the grace of Jesus Christ, had preserved her from all feelings of haughtiness and pride, and still more from that contempt of others which is the sign of a mean or little mind. She had that crowning grace of high birth and beauty which is called Christian courtesy; and that and her natural goodness gave a peculiar charm to her face, so that every one was attracted and impressed by her.

It is not difficult to understand how well a woman of this sort acquitted herself of the many and delicate duties of her position in the mixed society in which she lived. Her relations were of two sorts. On the one hand she was linked in the tenderest bonds of sympathy with the most eminent Christian women, such as Marcella—of whom we shall hear a great deal later on—and Titiana, who was her dearest friend; and on the other, she was thrown constantly with the Pagan aristocracy, and especially with the brother of her husband, Julius Festus Hymetius, who was a considerable personage in

those days, holding high places and eminent in history. Ammian Marcellinus devoted a whole article to him;[1] and an inscription recently found in Rome, in the excavations of the Palazzo Favorelli, has thrown fresh light on the part he afterwards played in Paula's life. This inscription tells us that he was an ardent worshipper of the old Pagan deities, which won him the favour of Julian the Apostate, under whose reign he was made pro-consul of Africa. It adds that during his proconsulate he restored the discredited Pagan priesthood to their former dignities, and desired that his province should petition the Emperor for the extraordinary favour of erecting two statues in his honour, which were accordingly set up—one in Africa, and one in Rome; and it is this last which has been recently discovered and which bears the above-mentioned inscription.[2]

Under the reign of Valentinian he was banished, not only from religious motives but on a charge of treason, from his having taken part in certain magic incantations practised by one Amantius against the Emperor. But the decree was soon after repealed, as we find him at Rome some years after, at the same time as St. Jerome. His wife's name was Prætextata, and she was probably a Pagan likewise, and sister to that Vettius

[1] *Rerum Gestarum*, lib. xxviii. 1.

[2] Here is the inscription, published by Count Rossi in his *Bulletin of History and Archæology*, October 1863, p. 178:—

'Ivlo Testo Hymetio C. V. Correctori Tvsclæ et Vmbriæ prætori vrbano, Consvlari Campaniæ cvm Samnio Vicario urbis Romæ æternæ proconsuli provinciæ Africæ ob insignia eivs in rēpublicam merita. . . . et quod studium Sacerdotii provinciæ restitverit. . . . Provincia Africa decretis ad divinos principes missis Valentem Gratianum et Valentinianum perpetuo Augustos statuam unam apud Carthaginem sub auro, alteram quoque Romæ eidem sub auro postulandum esse credidit,' etc.

Prætextatus, whose *bon mot* to Pope Damasus has been so often quoted: '*Make me Pope, and I will become a Christian.*'[1]

Prætextatus was the friend of Symmachus and of the high-priest Albinus, those last representatives of the old Pagan worship as of the ancient literature.

All these personages are known to us by the letters of Symmachus and also by a curious work of Macrobius', entitled 'Saturnalia,' which are a collection of literary and philosophic conversations supposed to have taken place during the Saturnalian feasts, at the house of Vettius Prætextatus, between him, Symmachus, Albinus, and other obstinate adherents of Paganism. Theirs was a Paganism without conviction, which was in reality but a pseudo-patriotism, a clinging to old traditions, and a comfortable indifference to all forms of religious belief or practice.

Such was the society with one half of which Paula was compelled to live, whom she was obliged to receive at her house, and to whom she had to pay visits in return. It formed the first society in Rome, and also the most Pagan. Her intercourse with such society evidently demanded immense prudence, reserve, and dignity. It was a special duty inculcated on all Christian women then, as now, to set an example of the truth of their religious profession by their superior gentleness, sweetness, and forbearance, and by the exercise of all virtues. Thus and thus alone would they become living witnesses of the faith. In this manner they paved the way for the reception of Christianity among their friends, and that far more effectually than by controversy. And we have reason to believe that to Paula's influence were owing the many conversions which came about at that

[1] Hier. *Epist.* 38, *Ad Pammachium.*

time among the patrician families in Rome. One especially filled her heart with great delight, and that was the reception into the Church of a near relation of her own—Gracchus, of whom we have before spoken and who was at that time Prefect of Rome. This striking conversion was decided at last by a very remarkable circumstance. One of those popular superstitions which expiring Paganism called to its aid—the worship of Mithra—which had been imported from Greece to Rome, had greatly spread during the decline of the Empire. Gracchus, during his prefecture, insisted upon entering the cavern or den of Mithra, which was under the Capitol, in order to judge for himself as to these supposed mysteries. But he was so indignant at the jugglery he discovered, that he destroyed the idols and shut up the cavern; while his eyes being opened to the follies and powerlessness of a worship which made use of such methods to attract its votaries, he eagerly begged for instruction in the Christian faith and expressed an earnest desire for baptism.

Paula prayed most ardently during the struggle which went on in this soul, and was proportionably rejoiced at his reception. This conversion made such a sensation in Rome and in his own family that we find St. Jerome, twenty years later, reminding Paula's daughter-in-law, Læta, of the event, to encourage her not to despair of the conversion of her father, the high-priest Albinus.

We will allude to one other instance of the good effect of Paula's gentle, loving influence. In 366, Paula being then twenty years old, Pope Liberius died and was replaced by Pope Damasus. But this election, in spite of the eminent qualities of the new pontiff, was disputed by the schismatic party which had been formed in Rome during the exile of Liberius. The Prefect of Rome was

at that time Prætextatus, whose sister, as we have before observed, was the sister-in-law of Paula. The most terrible tumults ensued. Blood was shed even in the churches; and on one occasion more than one hundred and twenty persons fell victims in the struggle. The Prefect was compelled to interfere, and it was he who brought about the peace of the Church by the triumph of Pope Damasus and of justice. There is no doubt that it was through the influence of Paula that peace was obtained, as she alone could enlighten Prætextatus as to the validity of the Pope's election; and cotemporary historians affirm that she thus contributed her share in the great service done to the Church by the Pagan prefect; just as her mother had assisted in the recall of Pope Liberius from exile. The most intimate relations existed ever after between the Pope and Paula's family, as we shall see on the arrival of St. Jerome at Rome.

But whatever may have been the political and social triumphs of our saint, there is no doubt that in her own home she was the happiest of wives and mothers. Her young family grew up round her in health and beauty, and fulfilled all their mother's warmest aspirations. Toxotius had only one regret—that he had no son to bear his name. This, his earnest wish, was at last granted. Paula's fifth child was a boy, who received at the font his father's name, Toxotius, and it was her last child.

We have now related all that history mentions of this first portion of Paula's life. We see her crowned at once with every happiness and blessing—a beloved wife, a happy mother; first among the Roman ladies in birth, distinction, rank, and virtue; enhancing all these gifts by that goodness and kindness which go straight

to the hearts of men; universally looked up to and respected, not only by the Christian but equally by the Pagan society in which she lived; the friend of all who were the most eminent in the Church for piety or ability; in a word, the pride, as St. Jerome writes, of her husband, her children, her family, and of all Rome; for the people had their eye on her and were never weary of singing the praises of one who, to the great name so dear to all Roman hearts, united the noble chastity of the matrons of old,[1] and the charity and piety peculiar to those who held the Christian faith. But the events of these thirty years of joy and happiness are shrouded in obscurity. We must resign ourselves to the fact. The Paula of history, the saint whom God has given to us as a model for women of all ages, is not the great lady in the world, or even the happy wife and mother. But it is the same woman, struck down by an overpowering blow which crushes all her earthly happiness; and who, from the very depths of this great trial, rises so far above all ordinary conditions that she attains to heroic virtue and to a perfection which rarely springs but from extraordinary sorrows. It seemed as if it had pleased God to accumulate all earthly blessings on her head for thirty years, so as to make her understand, by the sudden break of her happiness, the instability of all things here below. Now we shall lift the veil which shrouds our heroine, for then commenced her real life, which is that of the soul.

[1] His orta majoribus, et fœcunditate ac pudicitiâ probata, primum iro, deinde propinquis, et totius urbis testimonio.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

CHAPTER II.

ST. PAULA A WIDOW.

(379–382.)

PAULA was only thirty-one when God sent her the terrible trial of widowhood. This unexpected blow, which came upon her in the midst of such intense happiness, was an overwhelming one. Nothing was wanting to make it heart-breaking. She had for Toxotius all that passionate tenderness which belongs especially to Christian wives, a feeling which was all the deeper for its purity; and sixteen years passed in such an intimate union, without one cloud having ever dimmed their love, made it apparently almost impossible for her to bear the thought of ever living without him. He died suddenly, in the flower of his youth and manhood, at the very time when his young family, growing up round him, and the wife he so tenderly loved, required all his protecting care, while they crowned his domestic joys. All, in fact, seemed, till then, to smile on the descendant of the Scipios; and this was the very moment chosen by God to annihilate all this happiness and bury it in the tomb which had so unexpectedly opened, as it were, under his feet. Paula was at first so overwhelmed by the blow that she could not resist it. Her strength gave way, and fears were entertained for her life.

Nothing could stop her tears. Never was a husband more mourned; never did any blow strike deeper. What a change, in fact, did it not make in her life! What desolation in her beautiful patrician home! And what a burden for a young woman of thirty-one were these five orphan children, of whom the youngest—that son so earnestly desired—was hardly old enough to understand his misfortune; and the four others only knew enough to mingle their tears with those of their broken-hearted mother, who felt it more perhaps for their sakes than even for her own!

It is probable that Paula's parents were then dead, for St. Jerome makes no mention of them. But her brother remained, as well as her brother and sister-in-law, and many near relations and friends, both Pagan and Christian. Consolations were not wanting to her—at least, what people call consolation. All the aristocracy of Rome as well as the people shared in her sorrow. Matrons and friends succeeded one another in paying visits of condolence. The world, in fact, did its best to pour balm into her wound. But in a heart like hers such a sorrow was irreparable. The crowd of would-be sympathisers, with their matter-of-course set speeches, wearied her to death. In her heartfelt sorrow she did not wish for distractions. Although grateful for their sympathy, she wanted something more. Her terrible loneliness left an aching void in her heart which nothing could fill. This was the moment when grace was to touch her soul: the crisis which God had willed. In every human life there is a decisive moment when God demands of a soul some great act of generosity on which its whole future depends. Life will henceforth be commonplace or sublime according to the answer which is then made to the divine appeal. That moment

was come for Paula; and the terrible trial which God had sent to her was, in the secret designs of His providence, the means whereby all the trammels of her ordinary life were to be broken through, and she herself left free to attain to the highest degree of perfection. God called her, and she was at liberty to follow or to disregard His voice; but on this decision her whole future life would rest. There were two courses open to her: She might accept her widowhood—we do not mean lightly, after the fashion of many of the young widows around her, who, in the universal relaxation of manners, looked upon it as a species of freedom: for feelings of this sort Paula's nature was both too noble and too deep—but she might, without sin, have simply borne it, rather than feel resigned; and have nourished a secret hope of exchanging it a little later for a second union. To have acted in this way would have been to fall short of God's special designs on this soul, and to reduce her life to one of ordinary routine. But there was another course open to her. She could accept her widowhood in its entirety—such as Christianity understands it—and with a dignity which commands universal respect; for widowhood, is, in truth, a holy estate: a sacred thing. Independently of the supernatural merit which faith can give, there is, in a true widow, the triple consecration of sorrow, fidelity, and virtue. The virgin is faithful to God and to herself; the widow is faithful likewise to him whom she has loved and lost. For him she guards the avenues of her heart with jealous care, worshipping his memory, and living always as in his sight. She is still one with him, although he is gone beyond the veil; and she lives in the hope of a future reunion. Such are the shades of difference between the widow and the virgin—two flowers on the same stalk, and which in the Christian

Church are looked upon as equally admirable. If there be something purer in the virgin, there is something grander and more touching in the widow; for suffering, and tears, and sacrifice have passed over her and set their seal on her consecration.

Between these two kinds of widowhood Paula, when the first burst of her sorrow was over, and she could begin to look the future calmly in the face, could not hesitate for a moment. The blow which had deprived her of Toxotius had broken her heart too completely for her to think of forming any fresh attachments. And the emptiness of all things here below made itself felt too deeply and sorrowfully in her heart to make her wish to lean again on human joys. She understood God's purposes towards her; accepted the sacrifice He proposed, and by its full acceptation transfigured her whole life.[1] This decision brought peace, if not immediate consolation, to her troubled soul. She resolved to free herself from the shackles of the world, and to walk bravely and generously in the heroic path to which she felt that God had called her.

Around her were several persons who had already entered upon a like course, and who would, she felt, be both an encouragement and a support to her. On the Aventine Hill, in the palace of Paula's old friend, Marcella, a little chosen society had been formed some years before, consisting of widows and virgins belonging to the first families in Rome, who, under the direction of

[1] The steel which the diamond prevents the loadstone's following, flies towards this same loadstone when the diamond is taken away; thus the heart of a holy widow, which was hindered from giving itself entirely to God during her husband's life, will instantly, after his death, fly to the Greater Good, and be filled with celestial sweetness.—St. F. de Sales.

Pope Damasus, edified the whole Church by their charity and virtues. Their example attracted Paula irresistibly. But before going on with her history we will cast a glance on the original formation of this holy company, for it is the key of all Paula's future life.

The Church had just emerged from an era of persecution, which had acted as a sort of refining fire in which the souls of the early Christians were tempered and purified. But she was now menaced by a fresh and more insidious danger—that of being weakened and corrupted by the effeminate luxury of the Pagan society by which she was surrounded. To understand the extent of the peril, we must bear in mind the thorough demoralisation and decay of both the Eastern and Western Empire of Rome in the beginning of the fourth century. Paganism, although politically vanquished, was still engrained in the laws and customs of society, and seemed inclined to take its revenge on Christianity by infusing its corruptions and its love of ease into the homes of even the most eminent of the professors of the new faith. Necessarily mingling in the daily life of the Pagans around them, the Christians yielded by degrees to the deleterious influences by which they were surrounded. The moral ruin of the old world was accelerated by political miseries. The Empire was gradually breaking up, and the degenerate Romans consoled themselves for their degraded and servile position by an unlimited indulgence in vicious pleasures and that species of shameless luxury of which we shall soon give our readers some inconceivable instances. The evil spread even to the heart of the Church. False virgins and false widows shielded under their religious veils lives which men had too good reason to suspect and think of lightly; and more than one priest became the shame and scandal of the Church

by his luxury and worldliness. A remedy was needed, and one equal to the danger. God was not wanting to His Church in this her hour of peril; and the spirit of holiness and zeal which He inspired in certain devout souls was the more remarkable as the danger became more menacing.

The reaction began in the East by the foundation of monasteries, where, in opposition to the prevailing corruption, an example was given of the most heroic austerity and all other Christian virtues. In Rome, strange to say, the first efforts of reaction began in the least expected quarter—namely, in the heart of the most aristocratic portion of society. The watchword, as usual, was given by women. They threw themselves into the narrow path of superhuman charity and mortification of the senses, with a fervour which attracted the patricians themselves to follow in their steps, ashamed to be outdone by the weaker sex. The result was one of the most admirable movements of Christian regeneration recorded in history. We will now relate how it began and to what pitch it had arrived at the time of Paula's widowhood.

It was the illustrious patriarch of Alexandria, St. Athanasius, who gave the first impulse to this great movement. Three times had the Arian persecution exiled him to the West, and three times had this valiant athlete of the Church sought refuge in Rome. He brought with him an account of the wonders wrought by the anchorites in the deserts and on the borders of the Nile. His 'Life of the Patriarch of the Desert,' the great St. Antony, written in the lifetime of that saint, inflamed the imaginations of his readers and gave a fresh impulse to monastic life in the West. Athanasius had spent seven years in the Thebaïd. He had seen St. Antony, St. Pachomius, St. Hilarion, and many others, and gave the

most extraordinary accounts of their superhuman lives, in which they were rivalled, if not surpassed, by equally holy and devout women.

In one of Athanasius's visits to Rome, a noble widow lady, named Albina, had the honour of receiving this illustrious guest under her roof. Albina had a little girl, called Marcella, of an ardent nature, and one which was easily led up to the highest truths. The conversation of the holy bishop made a most extraordinary impression upon her. Seated at his feet, her large eyes fixed upon his face, the child's whole soul was absorbed in his descriptions.[1]

Athanasius had brought two of these monks with him from the East, one of whom, Ammon, was so austere, and so absorbed in the contemplation of divine things, that he would pay no visits, nor go to look at anything in Rome, save the tombs of the apostles. The other, Isidore, who was barely twenty, delighted every one by his gentleness, sweetness, and simplicity. It was this young monk who, when Paula visited Egypt some years after, received her at Alexandria. Marcella was never weary of asking them questions, and the seed thus sown in the child's heart was hereafter to bear fruit a hundredfold.

From deference to her mother's wishes, and because she had no other child, and had sacrificed her whole life for her sake, Marcella consented to a marriage which had been arranged for her. But at the end of seven months, having become a widow and free, she took a

[1] Ab Alexandrinis sacerdotibus, papaque Athanasio, et postea Petro, qui, persecutionem Arianæ hæreseos declinantes, quasi ad tutissimum communionis suæ portum Romam confugerant, vitam beati Antonii adhuc tunc viventis, monasteriorumque in Thebaide Pachumii, et virginum ac viduarum didicit disciplinam.—*Epist.* 96, *Ad Principiam.*

firm resolution not to embark in a second marriage, and to devote herself to an imitation, however humble, of the virtues described to her by St. Athanasius. Nevertheless, her youth and beauty, to say nothing of her cleverness, attracted many illustrious suitors for her hand. The principal was the Senator Cerealis, one of the most eminent men of the empire, a Consul, and allied to the family of the Cesars; for he was the brother of Galla, sister-in-law to the great Constantine, and the mother of Cesar Gallus. He was a man of a certain age, but enormously rich, and offered to leave his whole fortune to Marcella. 'I will be more of a father than a husband to her,' he exclaimed. Albina earnestly desired this marriage, which would have conferred so great an honour on her family; but Marcella was inflexible. 'If I wished to marry again,' she replied to her mother, 'I should choose a husband, and not an inheritance.' To which the Consul having replied 'that a young man often dies before an older one,' Marcella retorted: 'But does that prove that an old man will live a long time?[1] which answer to Cerealis discouraged all the rest.

Very soon Marcella went a step further, and after having given up the idea of a second marriage, began to renounce the world—that is, worldly society and pleasure. She turned her palace on the Aventine Hill into a species of convent, where she spent her time in prayer, austerities, and good works. She never went out except to visit the poor and sick, or to the Basilicas, in company with her mother, at a time when the crowds there had

[1] Si vellem nubere et non æternæ me cuperem vovere pudicitiæ, utique maritum quærerem, non hæreditatem. Illoque mandante posse et senes diu vivere, et juvenes cito mori, eleganter lusit: Juvenis quidem potest cito mori, sed senex diu vivere non potest.—*Epist.* 96, *Ad Principiam.*

dispersed. She had given away all her beautiful dresses, put aside her jewels, and even taken off the gold ring which all patrician ladies wore on their left hand, and which served as a seal. She did more. Trampling under foot the prejudices of her class, she dared (for the first time among Roman matrons) to put on that religious habit which was so ridiculed at Rome, but of which St. Athanasius had made her understand all the excellence in the sight of God.[1] At first people cried out against this eccentricity. But by degrees all tongues were hushed before this life of charity and consistent piety; and very soon her example led many others to imitate her sacrifices and austerities, and in a way which astonished all Rome.

This religious movement received a fresh impulse from an event which made an immense sensation in patrician society, and which had been provoked by

[1] Nulla eo tempore nobilium feminarum noverat Romæ propositum monachorum, nec audebat, propter rei novitatem, ignominiosum, ut tunc putabatur, et vile in populis nomen assumere; non erubuit profiteri quod Christo placere cognoverat.—*Epist.* 96, *Ad Principiam.*

St. Jerome says that Marcella was the first among the Roman ladies who embraced the religious state, *propositum monachorum*, that is to say, a manner of life which was at once ascetic and solitary, with other companions who were like-minded. And thus he distinguished these widows and virgins from others. It is supposed that the law passed by the Emperor Constantius in 354, when Orphitus was prefect of Rome (which decreed that the punishments inflicted on the ravishers of consecrated virgins were to be equally applicable to the ravishers of those widows who were vowed to the service of God), was promulgated in favour of Marcella, so as to protect her from the violence and growing pretensions of Cerealis. There is no doubt that this new edict was framed in consequence of the danger to which these consecrated widows were exposed in those lawless days; and it coincides exactly with the time when Marcella had finally rejected Cerealis, and had begun to follow the counsel of the great St. Athanasius.—Rossi, *Bullétin Archéologique.*

Marcella's example. There was in Rome a young lady of noble birth and of the old race of Marcellus, though of a different branch from Marcella. Her name was Melania. Her father had been Consul in the year 341. Married when very young to a young man of illustrious birth, but whose name is unknown to us, Melania had three children, to whom she was devotedly attached. But all of a sudden, when she was only twenty-two years of age, a sudden illness deprived her in one day of the husband she had so tenderly loved, and two of her children, who were buried in the same tomb. When the first moments of agonising grief were over, Melania roused herself with almost superhuman energy, and accepting her widowhood and the loss of those that were so dear to her as the dispensation of Providence and a call from God to devote herself more entirely to His service, she resolved to embrace the penitential life of which Marcella had given her the example. A few years later, wishing to see with her own eyes the lives of the holy anchorites which were imitated at a distance in Rome, she left her last remaining child (a little boy, who afterwards became prefect of Rome) in safe hands, and started for the East. St. Athanasius was still alive, and she had the consolation of seeing in Alexandria that great light of the Church which was about to be extinguished on earth to shine in all its brightness above. But after having traversed the deserts of Egypt, visited all the remarkable monasteries, and then turned her steps to Jerusalem and the Holy Places, Melania could not make up her mind to return to the corruptions of Rome. She decided at last on building a small monastery near Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, and there, with certain pious companions, lived a life of purity, austerity, and prayer.

This striking example was not without its effect, and gained many recruits at Rome, who all determined to follow this more perfect way. Among those who resolved thus generously to walk in this narrow path, some continued to live in their own homes like the widows and virgins of the first centuries: others felt the want of drawing closer together; and thus began, without rules, the first attempt at life in community. A species of what we now call convents arose in the different palaces of these patrician ladies. The principal centre of this great movement was Marcella, whose ardent zeal and strong common sense gave her the very qualities most needed for its organisation. She had, besides, all that fascination of manner which attracts and draws others to follow in her lead. We may, in fact, call her the standard-bearer of these noble women, who were all under the influence of the same divine grace, and who were prepared to march courageously against those enemies of the faith—effeminacy and luxury—which were undermining the Christian spirit of Rome. A certain number of young virgins and older widows had come to live with her, and share in the practices of her austere life. A little community of pious souls was thus formed on the Aventine Hill, of which Marcella was the mother, and the venerable Albina the respected and venerated head.

Who were these virgins and widows of the Aventine, of whom Paula is about to become the friend and companion? We do not know them all, but we will give a sketch of a few of them.

The first who came to take refuge under Marcella's wing was Sophronia, followed by another called Felicita. We are only told the names of these two; but of the history of the third, Marcellina, we will give some details.

Marcellina was the daughter of an ancient governor of Gaul, and sister of two men equally celebrated in after-life; one, named Ambrose, was created, when very young, prefect of Liguria, and thence elected to the archbishopric of Milan, where he became so famous; the other, named Satyrus, died young, but was immortalised by the eloquence of his brother. The mother of these three children, having lost her husband, came to live in Rome: and there, Marcellina, inspired by the Holy Spirit, resolved to devote her virginity to God, and received the religious veil from the hands of Pope Liberius on Christmas night of the year 352. St. Ambrose has preserved for us the magnificent speech pronounced on that occasion by the holy pontiff. Marcellina at first lived like the primitive virgins in her mother's house. Ambrose and Satyrus grew up under the tender and watchful care of this holy mother and pious sister. But at the death of her mother, Marcellina, attracted by the holy example of Marcella, joined her little community on the Aventine; and when, a few years later Ambrose, then Archbishop of Milan, had become the eloquent propagator of that virginal life of which his sister had made him feel the sweetness, Marcellina insisted on his sending her, for the use of her young companions, those magnificent essays on virginity which he had lately preached, and which were so persuasive, that the mothers at Milan used to keep their daughters at home to prevent their being influenced by his eloquent and moving words. It is owing to the reiterated prayers of this very Marcellina that the Church is indebted to St. Ambrose for his admirable 'Treatise on Virgins,' the most beautiful of all the writings of that eminent doctor.

But outside the palace on the Aventine, the most

celebrated of these holy women were three illustrious patricians—Lea, a widow, whom the Church has now raised on our altars; the virgin Asella; and the young Fabiola, of the ancient race of Fabius.

Lea had long occupied the highest position in Roman society, and was a great friend of Vettius Prætextatus. But after she became a widow, by a sudden inspiration of grace she resolved to give up her worldly life, to brave the ridicule of her friends and neighbours, and to make a little holy community in her own house, after the example of Marcella.[1] Asella was about the same age as Marcella, and was only ten years old at the time that St. Athanasius came for his third and last visit to Rome. His conversation made the most profound impression on the child, who even at that early age began, like Marcella, to feel the divine attraction which moulded her whole life.

As her family would not give her the brown habit, which had become the custom for those young girls who wished to consecrate themselves entirely to the service of God, Asella one day took her *murenula*, or gold necklace, which she always wore, sold it, and bought with its price some brown stuff, which she had secretly made into a dress, and then appeared so attired before her whole family, so as to make them understand by so decided a step that she was not playing at a religious profession. She was not allowed, however, to make any vows for two years more. Then began for this child of twelve, brought up in every delicacy and luxury, a life of which St. Jerome has given us a beautiful picture. This young girl took a positive delight in the life of a recluse; considered her little cell as a paradise; and hiding herself from all eyes, never went out, except

[1] St. Hier. *Epist.* 20, *Ad Marcellam, De Exitu Leæ.*

secretly to the tombs of the martyrs; thus making for herself in this busy city of Rome as real a hermitage as the anchorites in the desert. Her only bed was the bare ground. Her days were spent in prayer, in chanting the Psalms, or in work; and she always prayed kneeling, so that, as Marcella attested to St. Jerome, her knees became perfectly hardened by this austere habit. Fasting was her delight. She lived principally on bread and water with a little salt. This she did all the year round, and sometimes spent two or three days without eating anything. In Lent especially she gave the reins to her love of mortification, and sometimes fasted for a whole week together. 'But, strange to say,' exclaims St. Jerome, 'in spite of this severe regimen, she lived to the age of fifty, without ever having had an ailing of any sort. Her body was as healthy as her soul was joyous. She was gay and yet grave; severe to herself, but amiable and tender to every one around her; without the smallest particle of affectation and the most winning simplicity. Her silence itself spoke and her words were few. Her manner was always the same; her dress was scrupulously clean, but without any attempt at elegance. But the beauty of her life was its consistency and calm, combined with an extraordinary evenness of temper. Such was Asella, a real pearl, whose price was felt in all Rome; for every one—virgins, widows, ladies in the great world, poor and rich, all alike revered and loved her.'

It was not the splendour of her innocence, but that of her penitence and charity, which distinguished Fabiola. A stain had once marred her fair life; but it was one of those stains which, when repented of, are changed into a glory. Married, when very young, to a villain, she did not then understand, like St. Monica, how dignified

and profitable a part she might draw from this very sorrow. And so, taking advantage of the permission given by the Roman law, she married a second husband without waiting for the death of the first. With such a fault as this the Church has never temporised. 'Other are the laws of Cesar and of Christ,' says St. Jerome. 'The decrees of Papinian are one thing, but those of St. Paul are another.'[1] Very soon, however, Providence, by one of those severities which are in reality special graces, broke the secret link which bound her. Her second husband, to whom she was tenderly attached, died suddenly. Fabiola, entering into herself and ashamed of her weakness, resolved that the reparation should be equal to the offence; and found in the old blood of the Fabius', and in the earnestness of her Christian soul, the courage to submit to a public expiation for a public fault. At this epoch Christianity was still powerful enough to maintain public penances in all their severity, and Marcellina's brother, St. Ambrose, was about to inflict it on the emperor himself, the great Theodosius. It was during Holy Week that penitents were re-admitted to the Communion of the Church in the midst of all the faithful. Fabiola chose the recurrence of this solemnity to repair the fault of her youth. And on that Easter-eve Rome witnessed a touching sight. Prostrate on the pavement of the Lateran basilica, in presence of the clergy and all the people, the illustrious patrician Fabiola, with her hair dishevelled and her eyes full of tears, implored the bishop's absolution for her sin. All present were greatly moved, and mingled their tears with those of the illustrious penitent. From that moment Fabiola embraced without wavering a life of

[1] Aliæ sunt leges Cæsarum, aliæ Christi; aliud Papinianus, aliud Paulus noster præcipit.—*Epist.* 85, *Ad Oceanum, De Morte Fabiolæ.*

perfection, and soon rivalled Marcella and her holy community in her superhuman charities and austerities. This pious movement was greatly encouraged by the holy pontiff who then occupied the chair of Peter—Pope Damasus—who was about seventy-five years old when Paula became a widow. Damasus is one of the great figures in the primitive Church, and one of the popes who did the most for the splendour of Christian worship and the development of Christian piety. He built several basilicas in Rome, and gave that famous baptistry to St. Peter's which was the admiration of all pilgrims in succeeding ages. No less celebrated were his labours in the Catacombs. If he were not the first, as some have imagined, to reveal to the Romans that sacred and subterranean city,[1] he, at any rate, brought it into greater notice and honour than before, and was the first who sung the praises of the martyrs there interred, in Latin poetry. He endeavoured to maintain among the faithful the pure spirit of primitive Christianity, and waged a relentless war against the Pagan luxuries and customs which were insidiously making their way into the bosom of the Church. He was therefore one of the most energetic supporters and admirers of those noble women whom we have just described, and had published many works both in poetry and prose to exalt the state of virginity, as a special call to chosen souls. His own sister, Irène, had thus consecrated herself to God. She died at the age of twenty, and the holy Pope had composed a touching epitaph in her honour.[2] Another of his occupations was the study of Holy Scripture, and he strongly recommended this kind of reading to the faith-

[1] M. A. de Broglie, *L'Eglise et l'Empire Romain au IVe Siècle*, tome vi.

[2] Baronius, tome v.

ful as the only food of true piety. Such were the souls and such the examples which Paula found around her when the overwhelming sorrow of her widowhood drove her to seek for a more perfect way. Her devoted and ardent friend Marcella fanned the flame which was smouldering in her heart until it burst, as St. Jerome says, into a perfect furnace of divine love. Crushed in her own youth by the same overwhelming blow which had fallen upon Paula, and more devoted to her than ever since this terrible sorrow had come upon her, Marcella had no difficulty in raising those eyes, heavy with tears, towards Heaven; or in inducing this cast-down soul to raise itself to thoughts of God and eternity. Marcella felt a true mother's love for this sad and stricken heart; and her tender solicitude extended itself to Paula's children; so that after a time she begged her to let her take Eustochium—the gentle child whose attraction towards a life of virginity had already made itself felt—into her own palace and even into her own room, that she might be brought up with the other young virgins to whom her house was a home.[1] Paula gladly consented; but kept with her Blesilla, who was nearly of an age to be married; Paulina, whose calm and gentle character gave her mother no trouble; and the two little ones, Rufina and Toxotius, who were still in the nursery. Then she embraced courageously, and with all the ardour of her nature, the new life she had marked out for herself, and very soon surpassed her virtuous rivals. 'Lamps of which the oil is aromatic,' writes St. Francis of Sales, 'emit a sweeter scent when extinguished than

[1] Hujus amicitiis fruita est Paula venerabilis; in hujus cubiculo nutrita Eustochium, virginitatis decus.—*Epist.* 96, *Ad Principiam.* Tu quæ prima scintillam nostro fomiti subjecisti.—*Epist.* 44, *Paulæ et Eustochii ad Marcellam.*

when burning. In the same way, widows whose love in their marriage has been pure and deep give forth a stronger perfume of virtue and charity when their light (that is, their husband) is extinguished by death.'

Such was the impression produced upon every one by Paula during her widowhood, which seemed at once to develop and bring out all the beauty and self-denial of her character.

The transformation may indeed be said to have been as sudden as it was complete. A sort of gulph seemed henceforth to have been fixed between her and the great world. She adopted a widow's dress which she was never to set aside; and gave up altogether that servitude to social habits and customs which her position in society had formerly imposed upon her, and from which in her deep mourning she was altogether exempt. But this was not all. Her renunciation of the world and its pleasures was followed by an increased love and devotion towards God. It was as if she had but then understood the perfect liberty of being one of His children. Feeling that nothing could fill up the cruel void which had been made around her, that everything here below is fugitive and transitory, and that God alone is unchangeable, while in Him we find all, she threw herself into the love and service of our Lord with all the ardour of her nature. Strangers might have imagined that the death of Toxotius, so mourned by her, was almost a deliverance.[1] And this divine love in which she plunged herself more and more brought her not only solid and real consolations, but raised her to heights of perfection which excited the admiration not only of St. Jerome, but of the whole Chris-

[1] Ita virum planxit ut prope moreretur; ita se convertit ad Domini servitutem ut ejus mortem videretur optasse.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

tian world. The first step in the scale was her increased love for prayer. She felt herself strongly and powerfully drawn towards it; for the more a heart is closed towards the world, the more it opens towards Heaven. Having renounced all earthly joys, Paula felt all the sweetness of her intercourse with God. She prayed very often through the night, so that the dawn found her still on her knees.[1] Her greatest pleasure was to go to the Oratory on the Aventine and chant the Psalms with Marcella's virgins. The Holy Scriptures became her daily meditation. In fact, as great sorrows blind some souls, and plunge them into utter darkness, so Paula's was, on the contrary, thereby filled with a new light, which unveiled to her the eternal horizon to which she was hastening.

As the love of God grew in her heart, her soul attained to the second degree of perfection, viz. an exquisite delicacy of conscience and an extraordinary desire for absolute purity of heart. In these dispositions, and to preserve herself from all occasion of sin, she not only kept such guard over her home, since her husband's death, as not to admit a single man to her table,[2] but embraced with heroic courage every species of mortification. All her old luxurious habits, and the comforts of life even, were at once suppressed. Even her bath (which habit had made almost a necessity at Rome) was given up, except on imperative occasions of cleanliness and health. This aristocratic lady, accustomed to the

[1] Jugibus pene orationibus dies noctesque jungebat.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.* Quam continuis noctibus misericordiam Domini deprecantem sol sæpe deprehendit.—*Epist.* 28, *Ad Asellam.*

[2] Nunquam post viri mortem usque ad diem dormitionis suæ cum ullo comedit viro, quamvis eum sanctum et in pontificali sciret culmine constitutum.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

softest couch, slept only on a hair cloth thrown on the bare ground, and her fasts rivalled those of the ascetics in the desert.[1] In this state of fervour, the remembrance of the old and less perfect life she had before led, and the useless concessions she had made to the world, filled her with confusion and sorrow, and drew forth an abundance of tears from her eyes;[2] and these tears, mingled with those shed from her ever-living remembrance of her husband, wore out her eyes to an extent which made those around her fear for her sight. Even at night her sorrow did not cease; so that she may be said to have verified the words of the Psalmist: 'Every night I will wash my bed and will water my couch with my tears.'[3] By this sign Paula was known among all the other widows who were the honour of the Church in Rome: 'Paula passed among them, pale with fasting and almost blinded by her tears.'[4]

But these holy austerities, which afforded so great a contrast to the easy life of most of the patricians in Rome, not only tended to raise Paula to the height of purity, but awoke in her heart an ardent flame of charity; and as she already had surpassed Marcella and her other holy friends in the fervour of her devotions, so she went beyond them in her works of charity. And certainly, she had a wide field in which to exercise this virtue; for underneath the surface of all the luxury and riches of Rome the misery of the people was frightful.

[1] Balneas, nisi periclitans, non adiit. Mollia, etiam in gravissima febre, lectuli strata non habuit, sed super durissimam humum stratis ciliciolis, quiescebat.—*Ibid.*

[2] In quâ fontes crederes lacrymarum.—*Ibid.*

[3] Illud implens de Psalterio: 'Lavabo per singulas noctes lectum meum, lacrymis meis stratum meum rigabo.'—*Epitaph. Paulæ.* Psal. vi. 7, v.

[4] Lugens atque jejunans, fletibus pene cæcata.—*Epist.* 28.

Neither imperial doles nor the wheat which daily arrived from Egypt or Sicily sufficed to feed a population who thought it beneath their dignity to work. Paula devoted herself, therefore, without hesitation, to the poor in the courts and alleys of Rome. The whole of her income went in alms. Her charity knew no bounds, and no deserving pauper ever left her house with empty hands. She gave away literally all she had—and when she had exhausted her resources she would borrow for the sake of giving more. Not content with spending all her own money in this way, she became a beggar for the poor, and made use of all the influence which her position, her great name, and the advantages of her rich relations afforded her, to labour for their interests. She thus became the apostle of charity, as she had been its model.[1]

Paula had been living in this way for two years, when, all of a sudden, intelligence came to Rome which gave the greatest joy both to her and to her pious companions on the Aventine. The West was to have a great council, as the East had had before. Pope Damasus had convened all the Catholic bishops to Rome for the year 382; and the reputation of the venerable prelates who had been invited increased the anxiety of the faithful to welcome them to this great centre of Christendom.

The object of this council was to decide on certain questions of faith, but especially to put an end to the Antioch schism. This schism was the result of Arianism. The wounds inflicted on the Church by this formidable heresy were not easy to heal. The Antioch schism arose

[1] Si pauperem videbat, sustentabat; si divitem, ad benefaciendum hortabatur. Liberalitas sola excedebat modum; et usuras tribuens, versuram quoque sæpius faciebat, ut nulli stipem rogantium denegaret. —*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

from the exile of the holy bishop Eustatius by Constantius. The Catholics would not acknowledge Meletius, who had been imposed upon them by the Arian emperor, and so chose another for themselves. The result was that there were two Catholic bishops in Antioch—Meletius and Paulinus. Meletius died during the Council of Constantinople in 381, and unhappily a successor was appointed which only prolonged the schism, while the Catholics found themselves divided between Paulinus and Flavian. It was to bring this unseemly contest to an end that Pope Damasus had convoked the council at Rome. A large number of Western bishops responded to the Pope's appeal, especially St. Ambrose. But the Eastern bishops excused themselves in a letter which has become famous in ecclesiastical history. Some of them, however, obeyed the Pope's mandate, among whom were Paulinus, who was, as we have seen, personally interested, and St. Epiphanius, bishop of Salamis, in the island of Cyprus.

Paulinus had distinguished himself in the struggles against Arianism, when he had always fought by the side of St. Athanasius. The firmness of his character and his ardent faith had not yielded for a moment in those tempestuous times.[1]

St. Epiphanius was still more illustrious; and no name in the East since the death of Athanasius was held in greater veneration.

Born in Palestine, about the year 310, in a Roman town called Eleutheropolis, he had been converted in his youth by a striking example of Christian charity, having seen a monk strip himself of his only cloak to clothe a poor man. Having sold all his possessions, and reserv-

[1] Totum Orientem, excepto papâ Athanasio et Paulino, Arianorum hæresis possidebat.—S. Hier. *Epist.* 38.

ing only enough money to buy a few books, he became a monk himself under the great Hilarion, the disciple of St. Antony. Then, after having passed several years under this austere discipline, he visited Egypt, being desirous of making the acquaintance of St. Antony and the other monks in the Thebaïd, those marvels of Christian holiness in the fourth century. On returning to his own country he there founded a monastery; but being chosen bishop by the unanimous suffrages of the people through his great reputation for learning and sanctity, he saved himself by flight, and went to take refuge with his old master, Hilarion, in the Isle of Cyprus.

But there Epiphanius found the very dignity from which he flattered himself he had escaped. The bishop of Salamis died, and the inhabitants of that island came in a body and begged him to name a successor. 'Take Epiphanius,' was the saint's reply; and Epiphanius was obliged to accept. Once having been made a bishop, he threw himself with ardour into all the work and struggles of the Church, became a vigorous champion for the faith against the Arian heresy, and distinguished himself by his zeal and brilliant oratory in the councils. The people venerated him as a doctor and a saint, and thronged his path, as he walked, to have his blessing. Many miracles were recorded of him. He was at that time seventy-two years of age, and bore on his venerable face the double impress of age and personal holiness.[1]

We may imagine the emotion produced in the minds of Paula and her companions by the arrival of these holy personages. These great bishops had fought the

[1] Tantæ venerationis semper fuit, ut regnantes hæretici suam ignominiam putarent si talem virum persequerentur. . . . Patrem episcoporum, et antiquæ reliquias sanctitatis.—*S. Hier. Epist.* 39. *Ad Joannem Episcopum.*

Church's battles; they came from the East, from whence the faith had risen; they had seen Jerusalem and the Holy Places; they knew those fathers in the desert whose renown filled the whole earth; they had even lived under their direction; what wonderful accounts would they not be able to give! Paula flew to meet and welcome them, and obtained from Pope Damasus the special honour of lodging St. Epiphanius in her own palace. Paulinus was received with equal joy by another of these noble Roman ladies. But he constantly visited Paula, and was received by her with the respectful deference due to his great merits. What had originally been the occasion of the convening of these bishops was not, in the designs of Providence, the most important act of the Council. Of this history has given us few details, for its acts are incomplete. All we know is that Paulinus was maintained in his see, although the Church did not banish Flavian from its communion. But the great work wrought by the Eastern bishops at Rome was to give a fresh impulse to that admirable movement of the Spirit of God in the hearts of His people of which we have before spoken; for God, who holds in His hand the souls of men, often turns to their advantage events which would appear to have no connection whatever with the visible results.

Paula and her friends made the most of the visit of these holy bishops to Rome. They were never weary of hearing and seeing them; and Paula especially, who had the happiness of possessing St. Epiphanius under her roof, could not resist plying him with questions, especially upon the admirable lives of the fathers in the desert. But she herself, and her companions, were no less a marvel to the bishops. They could not conceal their astonishment at finding reproduced the austerities

of the Thebaïd in this city, so full of voluptuous Pagan luxury; and that not among poor or obscure persons, but in the most magnificent palace and among the oldest nobility of Rome.

It was during these daily conversations with Paulinus and St. Epiphanius that Paula first conceived the project which she afterwards carried into execution. On hearing of those widows and virgins who, on the borders of the Nile, emulated the lives of St. Antony and Hilarion, her disgust at living in Rome, and the strong attraction she felt towards a higher kind of life, increased to such a degree that she would at that very moment have been ready to forget her home, her children, and her family, and bury herself, if it were possible, in the solitude of the desert.[1]

Epiphanius and Paulinus lived all the winter in Rome. But when the bad season was over, and the weather calmer, they determined to return to their respective sees. Paula in vain endeavoured to induce them to remain a little longer, and saw them depart with inexpressible sorrow. But at that time she did not see any prospect of a possible realisation of her wishes. The future of her children was still uncertain, and insurmountable difficulties retained her in Rome.

In the ordinary dealings of His providence, God does not act rapidly with human souls. The inspirations He sends are like the dawn—first comes a kind of glimmering of light; and then, little by little, it widens and spreads until the full day drives away the shadows of darkness. This is the hour of grace; but we must

[1] Quorum accensa virtutibus, per momenta patriam deserere cogitabat. Non domus, non liberorum, non familiæ, non possessionum memor, sola, si dici potest, et incomitata, ad eremum Antoniorum atque Paulorum pergere gestiebat.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

learn to wait for that moment, and not anticipate it—as, in our impatience for others and for ourselves, we are so apt to do.

It was impossible for Paula at that time to carry out the wish which the glowing descriptions of the Oriental bishops had awakened. But this holy desire remained deeply rooted in her heart, and was to bear fruit under the guidance of one whom the bishops had brought from the East, but whom they left behind them in Rome. This man was St. Jerome. The time has come for us to say something of the history of this extraordinary man, who was destined to have so great an influence over the future life of our saint, and to whom, in consequence, so considerable a place is due in our history.

CHAPTER III.

ST. JEROME—ST. PAULA PLACES HERSELF UNDER HIS DIRECTION—HE GUIDES HER IN THE STUDY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

ST. JEROME is assuredly, by his genius, his eloquence, his heart, his character, his adventurous life, and his tenderness of soul, if not the most important, certainly the most original and attaching personage in the fourth century: I should be inclined to add that he was the most modern of ancient sages.

Amidst the great men of his day—St. Hilary of Poictiers, the profound theologian; St. Ambrose, the persuasive orator; St. Augustine, the famous writer and philosopher; St. Paulinus of Nola, the elegant poet and letter-writer;—St. Jerome appears as an entirely distinct character. His face was remarkable; his features were marked by manly pride, ardour, and austerity. His face was like the reflex of an Eastern sun on a Western figure. He was a giant in both sacred and profane literature; an indefatigable athlete in the struggles of the Church; in fact, in Christian polemics he resembled the old lion with which he is generally represented. He was a man whose powerful voice shook the old world, and whose pathetic lamentations over the fall of Rome move us even in the present day. Such was St. Jerome as cotemporary history represents him

to us. But one thing is wanting in this vivid picture. St. Jerome was not only an eloquent writer and a great doctor, he was, above all, a wonderful director of souls. He guided God's chosen ones with the skill and tenderness of a father; and with him began that generation of great directors, from St. Jerome to St. Bernard; from St. Bernard to St. Francis of Sales; from St. Francis of Sales to Bossuet and Fénélon—and so on to our own days, who, one and all, exercised that sublime ministry in the Christian world which has ever been the greatest help of chosen souls towards arriving at perfection.

It is under this aspect that we shall now see him. But before we can fully understand the source of his influence over Paula, we will give a rapid sketch of his previous history, and of the extraordinary preparation whereby Providence had trained him to fill this important office.

Three separate countries witnessed three distinct phases in his early life—Rome, Aquileia, and the Desert.

Born in the year 331, at Stridon, in Dalmatia, St. Jerome completed his education at Rome under the most famous rhetoricians and grammarians of the period, and in company with a chosen body of young patricians, the greater portion of whom remained his faithful friends to the end. Early distinguished by his eloquence and ability, people expected great things of him at the Bar or in the Schools. But he was not destined either to one or the other. Profane studies were to give place to Christian; and he was to become, not a great Pagan orator, but one of the most eminent fathers of the Church. His youthful imagination was immensely struck by the contrast which Rome presented at that moment between the religion of Jesus Christ and the old Paganism. On the one hand, he devoured all the works of the

famous poets, orators, historians, and philosophers, which formed the usual course of study in Rome; on the other, he was irresistibly attracted by that beautiful Christian literature which threw all mythological fables into the shade, and which was soon to convert the young rhetorician, as it had previously gained Victorinus, his master, and soon after Augustine. He mentions himself how, with his young companions, he used to visit the tombs of the martyrs and the Catacombs, and had a mingled impression of these holy places with Virgilian poetry—

Horror ubique animos, simul ipsa silentia terrent.

He was still at Rome when the news of the death of Julian arrived from the East, and he had a vivid recollection of having heard one of his Pagan masters exclaim: 'How can Christians call their God patient and merciful? Nothing is so terrible and so rapid as His wrath. He would not defer His vengeance for an hour.' [1]

So, in spite of all the temptations of Rome, the young Jerome was irresistibly attracted towards Christianity, and although still young was baptized by Pope Liberius. Henceforth all his genius and learning were placed at the disposal of his new guides. Very soon after he began his travels. He passed from Rome into Gaul, collecting books as he went, and copying all the manuscripts which came in his way; and after a short stay in the imperial Court at Trèves, on the semi-barbaric shores of the Rhine, where he found an everlasting remembrance of St. Athanasius, he went to establish himself in Aquileia, under the roof of the holy Bishop Valerian, in the company of certain chosen friends,

[1] M. Villemain, *Tableau de l'Éloquence Chrétienne au IVe Siècle.*

who were, like himself, devoted to study and full of Christian fervour. It was there that he first became intimately linked with Rufinus, whom we shall find again with him in the Holy Places; with Heliodorus, the future bishop, who had begun life as a soldier, and had only recently passed from the service of the camp to that of the Church Militant, and who followed Jerome into the desert, though he did not remain there; and with Evagrius, priest of Antioch, the great translator of the 'Life of St. Anthony' by St. Athanasius; and who was, by-and-by, to be the guest of Jerome in Syria.

Rome had made the young Jerome a Christian. Aquileia made him a monk, or, at least, filled his mind with the monastic spirit; but the desert put the corner-stone to the spiritual building. The East called him; the East—that cradle of the faith, that country of great saints. Accompanied by his three friends, Innocentius, Hylas, and Heliodorus, and taking with him his books—the only treasures from which he never parted—he traversed, with incredible fatigues and dangers, the whole countries of Thrace, Cappadocia, Bithynia, and Asia Minor, till he reached Antioch in Syria, where he became the guest of Evagrius. After having followed in that town a course of lectures given by the celebrated Apollinaris, he felt an increased longing for solitude, and went and buried himself in the savage deserts of Chalcis. Here the seal was put upon those resolutions which were to mould his whole future life.

Here Jerome finally succeeded in conquering his impetuous, passionate nature by penances, toil, and tears. His struggles and temptations have become matters of history. He himself relates, with a soul still trembling from the excitement, the fearful fights he had to endure, and the celestial joys which were their compensation.

'How many times in that terrible desert, scorched by the burning sun, have I not been carried back in thought to the delights of Rome, and mingled in my dreams with the beautiful young dancers of old times! Alas! My face was pale with fasting, yet my soul was full of burning longings; my body was attenuated and cold as death, yet the flame of my passions burnt as strongly as ever. Then, not knowing where to turn for help, I would throw myself at the feet of Jesus Christ; I would water them with my tears, and I resolved by weeks of fasting to conquer my rebel flesh. I remember having passed days and nights in that way, beating my breast, until calm returned to my soul. I dreaded my cell more than all besides, for it seemed to have become an accomplice of my thoughts; and more and more irritated against myself, I plunged further and further into the desert. If I discovered some unusually deep valley, or some pointed rock, there I would stop and pray. And often, God is my witness, after having watered the ground with my tears, and lifted my heart in prayer and sighs to Heaven, I found myself thoroughly transported, as it were, amidst choirs of angels, an inexpressible joy filled my soul, and I would cry out aloud: "We run, O my God, after the odour of Thy sweetness!"'[1]

At the same time, Jerome had a violent mental struggle with himself as to his intellectual pursuits. This brilliant disciple of the poets, orators, and philosophers, Cicero, Virgil, Pliny, and Quintilian, was at first a good deal troubled by the style of the sacred books. But at last, won by the superior beauty of the inspired writings, and by the austere yet poetical simplicity of the Bible, he determined, though not without a severe struggle, to give up altogether his profane studies, which

[1] *Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.*

he had continued even in the desert, and to apply himself exclusively to sacred literature. A kind of vision, which he thus relates, confirmed him in this resolution. 'Unhappy man that I was! I fasted before reading Cicero. After passing whole nights in tears at the remembrance of my sins, I used to take up Plautus. And then when I came back to the Prophets, I found their language too simple and their style careless! Blind mole that I was, I accused the light instead of accusing my own eyes. And now, one night in a dream, I thought I was brought before the tribunal of the great Judge, which was surrounded with glory. "Who art thou?" asked a voice which struck me with fear. "A Christian," I replied. "Thou liest," replied the voice; "thou art but a Ciceronian." And then the Judge ordered me to be seized and beaten severely. I swore that I would never more read profane books. On my waking, so strong was the impression of my dream that I seemed to feel still on my bare shoulders the smart of the divine rods.'[1]

Resolving, therefore, to devote himself henceforth to sacred studies alone, Jerome threw himself into this new pursuit with all the ardour of his nature; and as he had read everything that existed in Pagan literature, so now he devoured with equal eagerness the works of all the Christian theologians, apologists, and commentators on Holy Scripture; and to be able to penetrate to the depths of these sacred books, and also to vanquish importunate thoughts by harder work, he determined to learn Hebrew. 'With what labour I attained to a knowledge of this language, God alone knows!' he exclaims. 'But, thanks be to God, I gathered from this bitter seed the sweetest fruits.'[2]

[1] *Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.* [2] *Epist.* 95, *Ad Rusticum.*

From the heart of his desert, however, Jerome often turned his thoughts towards Rome, which he could not forget and by whom he was not forgotten. Summoned to take part in the theological disputes which then agitated the Eastern Church, and to decide between the two bishops who each laid claim to the See of Antioch, he addressed himself several times to Pope Damasus, to ask his counsel in these delicate questions and make a public profession of the Roman faith. He wrote also a great deal to his friends; for this ardent soul which had determined to crush so energetically all that was bad in its nature was all the more drawn towards pure and holy affections. He wrote to Rufinus, who had left the West to visit the Egyptian Solitaries. He wrote to Heliodorus, who had abandoned the desert, to recall him to his solitude. These letters were eagerly read in Rome. The Pope copied them with his own hand; Paula and the little community on the Aventine knew them by heart.[1] We will quote one or two fragments of these letters, by which we shall understand the way in which his vivid pictures affected the imaginations of his readers.

When, one day, Jerome heard that Rufinus was in Egypt, on a visit to Melania, and witnessing all those miracles of sanctity of which he had so long dreamt, he felt the greatest yearning to join him; but he was prostrate with fever, worn out with mental and bodily pain, and so was unable to undertake the journey. He therefore wrote an enthusiastic letter instead, in which among other things he describes how a mutual friend of theirs, named Bonosius, had become a monk, and was 'mounting one by one the steps of that Jacob's ladder' towards

[1] Epistolas quas aliquando in eremo dictaveras tota aviditate legi atque descripsi.—*Damasus ad Hier. Opera*, tome ii. p. 562. *Epistola* 95, *Ad Oceanum, de morte Fabiolæ.*

perfection. 'Vanish!' he continues, 'all ye vain fictions of Greece and Rome! Here is a man, young like ourselves, brought up like us in the Pagan studies of this age, noble, rich, highly respected and looked up to by the world; and who has now left everything—mother, sisters, a brother whom he dearly loved—*all*, in fact, to consecrate himself entirely to the love and service of God.' Then he goes on to describe in vivid and poetic colours Bonosius' new life in a desert island; his generous struggles against human nature; the consolations which ensued—those spiritual joys, so superior to the joys of sense; and then the solitude where, 'calm, brave, putting on the whole armour of God, he listens to His voice in the Holy Scripture, speaks to Him in prayer, and often, like St. John at Patmos, is favoured with beatific visions.' [1]

Another of Jerome's letters to Heliodorus was not only a panegyric of monastic life, but disposed of all the arguments which might induce a man to remain in the world. Heliodorus had, as we know, followed Jerome into the desert, but he had not remained there; neither Jerome's tears nor his entreaties could prevail upon him to do so. Family ties of the strongest kind recalled him to Aquileia—an old father, a cherished mother and sister, a nephew whom he had brought up as his own son, even the old servants who had been with him from his cradle, and who joined in the prayers and complaints of his family at what they considered his desertion of his home duties. His tender heart yielded to the pressure thus put upon him. On quitting Jerome he had implored him to write to him from his solitude. Jerome, inconsolable at his friend's departure, wrote him a letter, which is perhaps a little too flowery, as he him-

[1] *Epist.* 1, *Ad Rufinum.*

self owns later,[1] but which sets before him in the most vigorous language the happiness of a life of self-abnegation, and reproaches him for his desertion.

'Too delicate soldier!' he exclaims, referring to his original profession. 'What art thou doing under thy father's roof? Where is the trench, and the palisade, and the winter passed under thy tent? And yet the trumpet has sounded. From the clouds above our Divine Chief has descended to wage war against the world. And thou who hast sworn to march under His standard—is it from a bed of ease that thou wilt go and fight? Is it under the soft shade of thy ancestral woods that thou wilt learn to brave the noonday sun? No; a body accustomed to the tunic will not bear the weight of the cuirass; a head used to a soft covering will refuse to don the helmet; the arm which is grown limp in idleness can no longer wield the sword. . . . "But what!" I hear thee exclaim; "are we then in the times of the martyrs?" O my brother! thou art wrong if thou fanciest that a Christian can live a single day as such without suffering persecution. When thou thinkest thyself to be in the greatest security, then is thy danger the more imminent. "Our enemy, like a roaring lion, roameth about, seeking whom he may devour." And thou dreamest of peace! He is there in that shadow, like the lion in his cavern, lying in wait for his prey. And thou fanciest thou canst lead an easy, careless life! Right and left, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, riches, luxury, and voluptuous pleasures are striving to drive the Holy Spirit out of thine heart and defile His temple in thy soul. Believe in my experience. I, who speak to thee, am as a passenger lately escaped from shipwreck, who points out

[1] *Epist.* 34, *Ad Nepotianum.*

the rocks and shoals to the sailors. In the mighty sea of this age of self-pleasing, Charybdis, which is luxury, devours us on the one side, while Scylla, on the other, with a smiling face lays traps to drag us into concupiscence and mortal sin. All the coast is equally barbarous and dangerous. Fly! the sea is perfidious—its apparent calm is treacherous. It stretches itself out towards the horizon apparently brilliant and peaceful; hardly a ripple breaks the surface. But in her breast are hidden fearful storms and tempests, and her outward tranquillity conceals shipwreck and death.' . . . Then, after this picture of the perils of the world, Jerome describes the safety of the desert, and exclaims with rapture: 'O desert! all enamelled with the flowers of Jesus Christ! Solitude, from whence are drawn the mysterious stones of which are built the City of the Great King! Holy retreat, where one enjoys the intimacy of communion with God Himself! My brother—what art thou doing in the world? Thou who art greater than the world? How long wilt thou bury thyself under the roofs of men? For how much longer time wilt thou be imprisoned in the dungeon of a great town? Believe me, who speak of what I know, there is more light here. Here, freed from earthly cares, the soul takes its flight to its true home, which is above.'

The whole of this long letter is in a similar strain of enthusiasm. We can form but a faint idea of the excitement such burning words produced in Rome, or of the ascendency which the man who wrote them would exercise over the souls of those who were prepared to follow his guidance.

He had left the desert for a couple of years, traversed the East to glean wisdom from the great masters of the sacred sciences, visited Judea and the Holy Places, and

received holy orders at Antioch from the hands of Paulinus, on condition that he might remain a monk, and not be attached to any particular Church, when he found himself at Constantinople, studying theology under St. Gregory Nazianzum, and there met St. Epiphanius and Paulinus, who were about to obey the Pope's mandate to attend the Council at Rome, and proposed to Jerome to accompany them. They could not have found a better guide to Rome. His arrival was preceded by the ever-living remembrance of his talented youth; by the rumour of his extraordinary penances in the desert; by his writings and letters, which had so eagerly passed from hand to hand; by his wonderful reputation for sacred and profane learning; by his knowledge of Hebrew, which was almost an unknown tongue in the West—ripe, in fact, for the great work which he was about to undertake. He was then just fifty-two years old.

The Pope, Damasus, understood at once the value of such a man, and the powerful auxiliary he would be in the affairs of the Church, both from the immense research of his Biblical studies, and from the war he had declared against the luxury and self-indulgence with which Christianity was threatened in the double dissolution of Paganism and the Empire. Jerome was soon admitted into his entire confidence, and acquired an important position in Rome. Damasus first charged him with the difficult task of drawing up the circular letter which was to declare the substance of the Council to the Oriental bishops; and when Epiphanius and Paulinus returned to their respective sees, the old Pope, who was nearly eighty years of age, would not allow the departure of St. Jerome, and retained him about his own person, so as to assist him, with his vast knowledge, in his answers to the questions on dogmatic theology and discipline which

came from every quarter to Rome as to the centre of unity.[1] A close intimacy arose, in consequence, between these two great men. The study of Holy Scripture formed the great link and basis of their friendship. The Pope and the old solitary of Chalcis were never weary of their conferences on this subject, the wise and modest pontiff putting himself in the position of a scholar to so great a master. Sometimes the questions and answers passed between them in the form of letters. Jerome, engrossed by his Biblical studies, had not always the time to answer the Pope's notes; and then a deacon would be sent, who used to entreat him to solve the questions proposed by stealing a few hours from the night.

'I know nothing more interesting than our conferences on Holy Scripture,' writes the Pope, 'when it is I that question and you that answer. Nothing so nourishes my heart and soul, and I exclaim, like the prophet, that "your words are sweeter than honey to my mouth."'[2]

Jerome had not failed to become acquainted with the noble and devout women we have before mentioned, and, above all, with Paula, the hostess of St. Epiphanius; and with Marcella and her little colony of pious souls on the Aventine. But, absorbed as he was in his great work, and naturally reserved in character, he had kept himself aloof from their society. But after the departure of the two Oriental bishops, Paula and Marcella determined to try and induce him to become their master and director in the sacred sciences. But Jerome resisted all their

[1] Cum in chartis ecclesiasticis juvarem Damasum, Romanæ urbis episcopum, et Orientis atque Occidentis synodicis consultationibus responderem.—*Epist.* 91, *Ad Ageruchiam.*

[2] *Damasus ad Hieronymum*, tome ii. p. 562.

invitations. Marcella, with her usual ardour, insisted, and the Pope added his entreaties. Jerome at last promised to give a series of lectures on the Holy Scriptures to the community on the Aventine. Their joy on receiving this intelligence was very great.[1] Paula and her daughters hurried to Marcella's palace to share in the instructions. And so Jerome began his lectures to this circle of admirable women, whom latterly he called 'the Senate' ('in ironical contrast to the obstinate Paganism of one portion of the Roman Senate,' writes M. de Villemain), and also from respect for their noble and virtuous lives. He used to read the text and then add the necessary comments. First he showed the literal meaning; then he gave the interpretation, mingling the allegorical explanation with the literal one, and drawing the most unexpected riches from the text. He showed the relation between the Old and New Testament, and how Jesus Christ was, as it were, hidden under each syllable of Holy Writ. He applied the whole to the daily life of a Christian, drawing from thence encouragement for every practical virtue. His auditory were enchanted. Jerome spoke with enthusiasm; but having only just arrived from the East, and been for ten years unaccustomed to the Roman tongue, he apologised to his refined audience for his strange accent.

'My Latin has grown rusty,' he exclaimed, 'from having so long been obliged to speak, or rather stammer, Hebrew. I crave your forgiveness. The Apostle St. Paul said he had not the gift of tongues, but he had

[1] Cum me Romam cum sanctis pontificibus Paulino et Epiphanio ecclesiastica traxisset necessitas, et verecunde nobilium feminarum oculos declinarem, (Marcella) ita egit, secundum Apostolum, opportune, importune, ut pudorem meum suâ superaret industriâ.—*Epist.* 96, *Ad Principiam.*

another, and that was humility. He had both. But as for me, I am afraid I am like Æsop's dog, and have lost what I learnt when young, and have not found that for which I sought.'[1]

This was Jerome's humility; he had just proved the contrary. His great erudition, his impetuous eloquence, his external appearance, with his brown robe, his grave face, browned by the Eastern sun, his bright look, his rather abrupt manner—even the slight roughness of his voice, due to his Dalmatian origin, all contributed to give a strange charm and an extraordinary influence to his words.

These lectures became, as may be imagined, extraordinarily popular. The most distinguished priests in Rome, such as Domnion and Oceanus, and the best laymen, such as the Senator Pammachius, who was an old schoolfellow and friend of St. Jerome's, intrigued for the honour of being present. Jerome soon found out the ability and intelligence of these, his new, disciples, especially among the women. He wrote: 'It is impossible for me to say the amount I discovered in them of ability, penetration, and cleverness, and at the same time of purity and virtue.'[2] He began to understand what might be done with such souls if properly guided: and knowing the difficulties which the study of the Scriptures presents, and that there is, according to the figure of speech of Moses, a veil over the face of many of the prophets and apostles, he resolved to devote himself to their instruction for a time in these sacred sciences.

[1] Nos, ut scis, Hebræorum lectione detenti, in Latinâ linguâ rubiginem obduximus, in tantum ut loquentibus quoque nobis stridor quidam non Latinus interstrepat. Unde ignosce ariditati, etc.—*Ad Marcellam de Ephod. et Theraphim.*

[2] Quid in illâ virtutum, quid ingenii, quid sanctitatis, quid puritatis invenerim, vereor dicere.—*Ad Principiam, Epitaphium Marcellæ.*

Nothing was more touching than the respectful, confiding friendship which arose between this great master and his pupils; or more admirable than the zeal with which this ascetic monk unveiled to them the treasures contained in these Holy Books, to encourage them in the heroic life which they had chosen.'[1]

Jerome was, in truth, only too happy to show to these earnest, loving souls the full beauty of the Bible, 'which is,' he writes, 'as a field enamelled with celestial flowers.'[2] 'The Word of God,' he would repeat, 'is like a pearl which one may turn in every sense, and always find in it fresh beauties.'[3] 'All that we read in this Book gives light, even were we to stop at the outside. But it is in the depth of its wisdom—in the marrow, as it were, of its bones—that we find the greatest sweetness. We must break the nut to have the kernel.'[4] It was thus, in fact, that Paula and her friends undertook this important study. Jerome, with the usual modesty of really great men, would sometimes own that he did not know the explanation of such or such a passage. Then they would press him to push his studies still further till both he and they were thoroughly penetrated with the meaning of the text. If he had given only a partial solution to their difficulties, a messenger would come from Paula or Marcella with fresh questions and an entreaty for an immediate answer. Jerome, absorbed

[1] Divinarum scripturarum ardor erat incredibilis.—*Ad Principiam, Epitaph. Marcellæ.*

[2] Per prata virentia, et varios divinorum voluminum flores.—*Ad Principiam Virginem, Explanatio Psalmi* 44.

[3] Intelligas scripturæ in omnibus sacramentum; margarita quippe est sermo Dei, et ex omni parte forari potest.—*Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.*

[4] Totum quod legimus in divinis libris nitet quidem et fulget etiam in cortice, sed dulcius in medullâ est. Qui edere vult nucleum, frangat nucem.—*Epist.* 49, *Ad Paulinum.*

in his studies, hard at work refuting some heresy, or employed by the Pope in a correspondence with other Churches, had not a moment in which to reply. What did he do in this case? He kept their messenger till night and then dictated rapidly, by the light of a little lamp, the eagerly-expected answer. Sometimes, after an unusually important oral instruction, Paula would implore him to write it down, and Jerome would then compose certain doctrinal treatises, some of which remain to this day. These letters or short sermons passed from one to the other, and were intended for all. 'See,' he wrote one day to Marcella, 'the two letters I have written to Paula and Eustochium; for what I say to them, I say also to you.' And again, he writes to Paula, 'Don't forget to show my letter to the indefatigable Marcella.'

Indefatigable she indeed was, for she would never be satisfied unless he solved all her difficulties. One day, when reading the 90th Psalm, where it is written: 'He that dwelleth in the aid of the Most High, shall abide under the protection of the *God of Jacob*,' Jerome made her remark that by this expression was signified *Chaddaï*, one of the ten names given to Himself by God in Holy Scriptures. Marcella then eagerly demanded an explanation of these ten names, and Jerome gave her the answer, which we still find in his works.[1] 'One of the sweetnesses of a correspondence like ours,' writes St. Jerome, 'is to tell one another what each is doing or thinking, so as to be present to each other, although absent. I am very willing that science should have a part in our familiar intercourse. But you, in your determination to get at the bottom of everything, do not write a line which does not compel me to dive into the

[1] *Epist. Ad Marcellam, De Decem Nominibus Dei.*

most abstruse studies. Do you imagine I am sitting in the tent of the Pharisees and can be an arbiter and a judge of every question which may arise on every Hebrew text? But as your messenger is there, and in a hurry to go, I suppose I must do the best I can.' Then follows a learned explanation of all the symbolic meanings of the Mosaic sacerdotal vestments; and Jerome ends his letter with these touching words: 'Our common mother (the venerable Albina), is she well? I should bless God for it, and I pray for it every day. It is a great happiness for us to be able to venerate in her both a mother and a saint.'

But the most ardent in these sacred studies, and the woman whose intelligence and cleverness most struck Jerome, was Paula. She found in this divine source all that her soul needed—consolation, strength, and light—and she plunged into it with the courage and energy which she displayed in everything she undertook. Passages which she had read twenty times before came upon her with a new light, now that Jerome was at hand to unfold their hidden treasures. It was Paula especially who gave Jerome no peace: 'In vain I tried to resist her entreaties,' he writes; 'I was obliged to yield, and to resign myself to teaching her all that I knew myself; not certainly from my own head, but from the great men whose works I had studied. If sometimes I hesitated and confessed my ignorance, she would not let me off for that. She then insisted that I should tell her what others had thought about it, and which of these different explanations I myself preferred.'[1] The young Eustochium, who was Paula's constant companion, imitated her mother in this as in all else.

But Paula did more. Feeling that the true key to

[1] *Epitaphium Paulæ.*

the treasures of Holy Writ was to be found in the original language in which it was written, she determined to learn Hebrew. 'I am going to tell you,' writes St. Jerome, 'a thing which will appear incredible, but which is, nevertheless, perfectly true. This Hebrew language, which cost me God knows what trouble and labour, even in my youth, and which I go on studying every day for fear of forgetting it, Paula set to work to learn. And she learnt it so quickly, and so well, that she always recited the Psalms in Hebrew, and spoke that language with so perfect an accent, and so correctly, that she never confused it with any Latin words, as I was apt to do. And Eustochium was an equal proficient in this dry and difficult study.'[1]

The Psalms of David, which belong only to us, and to which no other literature can be compared: those hymns in which the royal prophet poured forth all his joys and sorrows, his tears and sighs; which seem to fit into the wants of every human heart, and which we may call the eternal poetry and prayer of the soul—these Psalms were the study which Jerome recommended above all others to his disciples. 'Our Simonides, our Pindar, our Catullus, our Horace is David. And what David sings on his Psalter of ten chords is Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'[2]

He made Paula and Marcella study these Psalms in all their senses—literal, spiritual, and prophetical. He introduced the method of chanting them in the Aventine monastery according to the alternate form observed in the East, and which St. Ambrose was about to introduce

[1] *Epitaphium Paulæ.*

[2] David, Simonides noster, Pindarus et Alcæus, Flaccus quoque et Catullus, Christum lyrâ personat et in decachordo psalterio.—*Epist.* 50, *Ad Paulinum.*

into the Church at Milan. He would that seven times a day, according to the Church's liturgical rule, these widows and virgins should thus pay to God the tribute of their praise. And this has later become the rule in all religious houses. He also introduced the practice of singing the 'Alleluia,' which the Church uses at Eastertide; and it was to this joyous cry that Paula and her companions rose daily to their work of prayer and praise.

St. Jerome pursued a distinct plan in his scriptural instructions for the knowledge of which we are indebted to a curious passage in his letter to Læta, Paula's daughter-in-law. He began by the Psalms; then took the Books of Solomon; afterwards the Proverbs—that wonderful collection of simple yet profound maxims, so full of practical wisdom. He dwelt specially on the Book of Ecclesiastes, where the vanity of all earthly things is so vividly brought before us; and then would come to Job, that great example of patience and courage. After going through this course of Old Testament history, he would come to the Gospels, and then to the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles. After this preparation he would turn to the Prophets, who had foretold all that the Gospels related; and ended by allowing his disciples to read the historical Books of the Old Testament, which, without such previous training, might, he thought, only trouble and perplex them. Last of all, he would give them the Canticle of Canticles, lest they should not apprehend its spiritual meaning.[1]

[1] Discat primo Psalterium, his se cantibus avocet et in Proverbiis Salomonis erudiatur ad vitam. In Ecclesiaste consuescat quæ mundi sunt calcare. In Job virtutis et patientiæ exempla sectetur. Ad Evangelia transeat, nunquam ea positura de manibus. Apostolorum Acta et Epistolas totâ cordis imbibat voluntate. Cumque pectoris sui sacrarium his opibus locupletaverit, mandet memoriæ Prophetas,

St. Jerome felt, as Monsgr. Dupanloup has so beautifully expressed it, that 'in studying the Holy Scriptures we do not enter into communication with sages or geniuses, but with the Holy Spirit of God Himself. We share in the thoughts of eternal wisdom. The highest truths and the purest and surest guides on this earth are found in the pages of Holy Writ.'[1]

But in these days this study is sadly neglected, and our piety is not fed by a sufficient recourse to this divine food. And that is why we are so often superficial and vague, so weak and worldly, and incapable of making great sacrifices. Our very familiarity with the sacred texts is a snare to us. What men or women now living in the world care to study Holy Scripture seriously as Paula did? Such a neglect is full of serious danger, which has been already understood and pointed out by those who think deeply and gravely of the future of Christianity.

But the more Jerome and his companions studied the sacred books, the more important did it seem to them to have an authorised edition to supersede the many different Latin versions in the West. The Pope had long wished such a work to be undertaken. The most common version of the Bible was the old Italian one, taken not from the Hebrew text, but from the Greek Septuagint; that is to say, a translation third-hand; and what was worse was that hardly any two versions were alike. The work of revision had become a positive necessity; but to undertake it

Heptateuchum, et Regum et Paralipomenon libros, Ezræ quoque et Esther volumina. Ad ultimum discat sine periculo Canticum Canticorum, ne, si in exordio legerit, sub carnalibus verbis nuptiarum spiritualium epithalamium non intelligens, vulneretur.—*Epist.* 56, *Ad Lætam.*

[1] *Lettres aux Hommes du Monde, de l'Éducation*, tome vi. p. 499.

required a man profoundly versed in a knowledge of all three languages, and no one at that time equalled Jerome in such sciences. The Pope finally commanded him to undertake this arduous and important work. Jerome, who had a full consciousness of the difficulties and delicacy of the labour, hesitated for some time; but at last yielded to the Pope's wishes, and, encouraged by Paula and Marcella, published at Rome the first edition of the New Testament, corrected with the utmost care on the original Greek; and also an edition of the Psalter, revised from the Septuagint: thus preluding the vast biblical works which he was one day to accomplish at Bethlehem under the advice and encouragement of Paula herself.

Such was the zeal awakened by Jerome in the public mind for the Holy Scriptures; and this zeal inspired an equal desire for the practice of the sublime virtues therein inculcated. This was specially the case as regarded the noble women who shared in his great work.

'What they called studying the Word of God,' writes St. Jerome, 'meant that they not only acquired the knowledge, but practised the sublime virtues it taught.'

And here again Paula excelled all the rest. The more he watched, the more he admired her. Her soul seemed to him even more beautiful than her extraordinary intelligence. He perceived in her the noblest and most generous impulses, and a courage which nothing could daunt. Of all the souls whom God had given him to guide, Paula's had the most affinity to his own, and was the most fitted to follow in his lead. But to no other also was his guidance so needful. After having passed, during the last two years, from the most

luxurious patrician existence to the life of mourning and penance which we have described, and still broken-hearted by her great sorrow, she was specially in need of a kind and fatherly guide. And then she was not alone. Jerome saw by her side the young and delicate Eustochium—that flower of purity—and her four other children, Blesilla, Paulina, and Rufina, who, with the little Toxotius, were all to be educated and trained; a heavy burden for a young mother! Besides all these considerations, the grave and general opposition which had arisen in Rome against Paula's new way of life, an opposition which was most strongly expressed among the Pagan members of her family, made Jerome foresee the storm which was about to burst upon her, and feel that to sustain this devoted, noble soul was a great work, to which he was bound to devote himself. And so henceforth the direction of Paula became one of his most anxious cares. After all, the study of Holy Scripture was in his eyes but a means to an end. The real object he had at heart was, in concert with Pope Damasus, to second the movement which the Holy Spirit of God had roused in His Church, and to strengthen and encourage the souls who had generously given themselves up to these holy inspirations. This work of direction and the powerful influence exercised by St. Jerome on the most illustrious of the Roman patricians are undoubtedly his greatest glory, and will form the subject of the succeeding chapter.

CHAPTER IV.

ST. PAULA UNDER THE DIRECTION OF ST. JEROME—HER GREAT PROGRESS IN VIRTUE.

(382-384.)

It was a great thing and a new phase in the history of the world when St. Jerome first undertook this direction of Christian souls. There never was anything like it in the Pagan world; it would, in fact, have been impossible for Paganism to have created it. Two things were necessary for its existence, and both were exclusively Christian: the one, the ideal virtue of which Jesus Christ had been on earth the model and inspiration; the other, that love of souls and of the invisible and supernatural beauty in each which the Catholic priesthood has drawn from the heart of our Lord, which is its only source. It is a feeling quite apart from every other—an emotion which has nothing human or earthly about it; it is the principle and groundwork of that fatherly and spiritual relationship which is the glory of the Christian priesthood, and which no philosophy or sect has ever attempted to imitate. Whatever might have been St. Jerome's ability with regard to the science of the Scriptures, he was a still greater master of the spiritual life. At that moment a profound sadness filled his soul at the sight of human misery, mingled with a disgust of all fleeting and perishable things, and a long-

ing for what was eternal and infinite. His very study of the Bible, with its continual allusions to 'All flesh being as grass,' and 'passing away as the flower of the field,' confirmed his melancholy—that torment of great minds! The events of the day strengthened all these feelings. At no period of the world's history were the catastrophes on every side more terrible and startling. Here were consuls, governors of provinces, men who had attained the highest honours, dying on all sides in disgrace and misery. There were the masters of the world, the emperors themselves, before whom all the universe trembled, carried off one after the other, and meeting with some tragic end. The Roman Empire itself was crumbling to pieces. Already hordes of barbarians had invaded her frontiers; Vandals, Sarmatians, and Goths ravaged the country in every direction, and made the Roman eagles bow before them. Jerome's patriotism was indignant at seeing the helmet yield before the barbarian bonnet; the sword before the arrow; and the brilliant cavalry of Rome giving way before the vilely-mounted barbarian hordes. Then the horrors that ensued—men and women carried into captivity by hundreds—bishops massacred—churches profaned—the ashes of the martyrs scattered to the winds—the horses of the barbarians stabled in the sanctuaries—everywhere shame and blood and ruin! In these unparalleled miseries Jerome recognised the scourge of God. But while all this detached him more and more from things below, it showed him also more than ever the necessity of saving the souls of men.[1]

[1] Pati necesse est multa mortalem mala. . . . Sed cur non replico nostri temporis calamitates . . . .? Dicit aliquis: Regum talis est conditio, feriuntque summos fulmina montes. Ad privatas veniam dignitates. . . . Non calamitates miserorum sed fragilem humanæ

What had taken such powerful hold on the austere mind of this man was less the doctrinal or dogmatic teaching of Christianity than its moral and practical virtues. He felt that the essence of the religion of Jesus Christ consisted in personal holiness. The strength which Christianity imparted to the hearts of its followers —those wonderful victories over the senses, which had cost him such bitter struggles—he beheld with admiration in these widows and virgins; and he arrived at Rome from the East as an ardent propagator of those sublime virtues which lead the Christian into the highest paths of perfection. Seeing the Roman Empire crumbling under its manifold corruptions, he felt that, both for society and for the Church, nothing was more necessary than to oppose to Pagan luxury this ideal of Christian purity and self-abnegation. He had himself chosen this narrow path from the first moment he had sought safety in flight in the desert. It was the thesis which he upheld all his life, and under which flag he was determined to fight the battle for God and the Church. No wonder, then, that he resolved to devote all his energies to sustaining, directing, and defending those noble souls whom he found possessed with the same ideal, and who had already courageously entered on a like path. He had, besides, the qualities and gifts which fitted him most for such a work. Like all true priests, he had a passionate love of souls. 'What is more beautiful,' he would exclaim, 'than a soul called the daughter of God!' The duty of a priest is to love souls—*all* souls—with a real

conditionis narro statum. Horret animus temporum nostrorum ruina persequi. Inter Constantinopolim et Alpes Julias quotidie Romanus sanguis effunditur. . . . Romanus orbis ruit, &c. &c.—*Epist. ad Heliodorum.*

and paternal love; and his glory is to make them advance more and more in goodness and in all virtue.[1]

That Jerome was eminently fitted for the task we have already seen. Added to this he had other qualities which are necessary to wise direction: the highest rectitude of purpose and great decision of character. Once convinced that a course was the highest and best, he never hesitated for an instant; his strong sense enabled him to go straight to his point, without stopping at half measures, and his ascendency over other minds carried them with him. He was one of those natures whom God has made strong so that other souls might lean upon them.

We have a precious record of this spiritual direction of St. Jerome's in his letters. He addressed a multitude to Paula, Marcella, Asella, Eustochium, and many others. He wrote to them constantly, and especially on all the important events in their lives, which was one of his ordinary methods of instruction. He tells us in his book on the Episcopal writers, which he composed in 392, that a volume of his letters to Marcella had been collected and published. Unfortunately this volume is lost; but what remains to us of this vast correspondence abundantly shows the serious way in which he treated the life of a Christian. In a literary point of view nothing can be more curious than these letters. They are brilliant, ardent, zealous, original, and eloquent, at the same time that they are ever the expression of deep feeling. In an historical sense, and as a picture of the times, they are equally valuable, abounding as they do in anecdotes and details, which make us enter into the Roman life of

[1] Quid pulchrius animâ, quæ filia Dei nuncupatur? (*Epist. ad Furiam*). Pro officio sacerdotis omnes Christianos filiorum loco diligimus, et profectus eorum nostra est gloria.—*Epist. ad Salvinam.*

the day, with its curious struggles between expiring Paganism and rising Christianity. But the greatest charm of these letters consists in their high moral tone and the spirit of love and faith which breathes through every line; and although certainly addressed to chosen and exceptional souls, we think no one can read them without feeling ashamed of idle self-indulgence, and being filled with fresh and more generous courage. For this reason the most eminent directors of the Church have always held them in such high esteem. St. Francis of Sales, when recommending Madame de Chantal to read them, says: 'I hope you will study carefully, my daughter, St. Jerome's correspondence. You will find some of his letters most beautiful.' And in his 'Introduction à la Vie dévote,' he pronounces this splendid panegyric: 'I have much to say to you on this subject' (widowhood), 'but I shall have said all when I refer you to St. Jerome.' Let the widow who is jealous of the honour of her state read his fine epistles to those Roman ladies who had the happiness of being the spiritual daughters of so great a father: '*for nothing can be added to what he taught them.*'

The special form of Christian direction may vary with time and place, but its spirit remains the same. The object set before his illustrious penitents by St. Jerome is the courageous practice of the Evangelical counsels both in virginity and widowhood; in other words, a supreme love of God with an absolute purity of soul, and the austere life which is its consequence. He did not undervalue the beauty and holiness of family life. On the contrary, he speaks of it constantly with respect and admiration. But he agreed with the Church in placing virginity on a higher pedestal, as well as holy Christian widowhood, which he calls the 'second degree'

of that virtue. 'There are divers gifts,' he used to repeat, 'in human states. To one is given that of virginity; to others of matrimony. I do not say that marriage is not a blessed state, and the gift of God; but there is a great difference between the two.' 'This is the liberty of God's children,' he would add. '"*If you will be perfect*," says the Saviour. He does not say, I force you, or I order you to do this or that. He only offers to one a more splendid crown.'[1]

Such is St. Jerome's teaching; and on this subject we have some magnificent and charming passages. He spoke of virginity as of the espousal of the soul with God: 'The virgin is the spouse of Jesus Christ, living among the lilies—that is, in pure hearts. A virgin in her mortal body lives the life of angels. Happy is that soul which knows on earth no other love than that of Jesus Christ.'[2] Again he wrote:—

'The blessings promised under the old law and the new were different. Eve brought forth her children in sorrow. But since a virgin conceived and bore a Son, who was the Mighty Prince, the God of Life, the old curse was destroyed. Death came into the world by Eve, but life by Mary. And since that hour the gift of virginity has been bestowed on woman as a great grace. When the Son of God came into the world He chose out certain souls to form His special family; and as He had angels as adorers in heaven, so He would have

[1] In hoc omni ætati omnique personæ libertas arbitrii relicta sit. *Si vis*, inquit, *perfectus esse*. Non cogo, non impero, sed propono palmam, ostendo præmia.—*Epist. ad Demetriadem.*

[2] Sponsus pascitur inter lilia, et inter eos qui vestimenta sua non coinquinaverunt, virgines enim sunt . . . in corpore vivere sine corpore. In corpore humano angelorum impetratur conversatio. Beata virginitas in cujus corde præter amorem Christi nullus alius versatur amor.—*Epist.* 22, *Ad Eustochium*, *passim*; *Epist.* 8, *Ad Demetriadem.*

angels to serve Him on earth. Then for the first time were heard those words: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."' (St. Matt. xvi. 24.)

'Set before yourselves, then, the example of the blessed Virgin Mary, who, by her admirable purity, deserved to be the mother of God; and you, too, may have a like honour. You know who has said: "*Behold My mother and My brethren.*" Impress His image on your souls; grave it in the depths of your hearts; and then, when He shall have grown in you and despoiled and attached to His cross all that is contrary to Him in your nature, you will become, by a new miracle, His spouse. Great is the travail, but then great will be the reward.'[1]

He painted with equal delicacy the state of widowhood, and showed to Paula and Marcella and the other younger widows around them the moral beauty attached to it by Christianity, which raised their condition so greatly above that of the ancient Pagans. He showed how these two virtues of virginity and faithful widowhood had their roots in human nature, but only attained to their full bloom under the vivifying sun of Christianity. Antiquity had witnessed that fidelity of a broken heart to a love which death had severed, and had likewise half perceived in the vestals the dignity of that voluntary immolation which creates a virgin. And it is Virgil—that most beautiful of Pagan poets—who has put into the mouth of a widow these touching lines, which Jerome loved to quote:—

> Ille meos, primus qui me sibi junxit, amores,
> Abstulit; ille habeat secum, servetque sepulcro!

(He who received my first vows has taken them with him, and will keep them for ever in his grave.)

[1] Grandis labor, sed grande præmium.—*Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.*

In Rome these traditions were still the glory of those families who had kept the old Roman spirit.

But St. Jerome was determined that the Christian widow should take a still higher ground; and that in the heart of the wife, bearing the faithful remembrance of the husband she had loved and lost, and to the pride of the matron guarding jealously the dignity of her name and of her blood—which are, after all, but natural virtues and the human side of widowhood—she should add higher motives; namely, the intimate and mysterious relations which exist between pure souls and Jesus Christ. 'If, from only the instinct of the heart,' he exclaims, 'the Pagan widow, nobly shrouded in her mourning, rejects all the joys of life, and buries them in the tomb of her husband, what may we not expect of the Christian widow, who owes her chastity in future not only to the spouse she has lost, but also to Him with whom she hopes one day to reign in heaven?'[1]

This was the new seal which Christianity put upon the dignity of ordinary widowhood. In fact, to reject all other support after being deprived of the one which death has shattered, is not that the height of fidelity? And is it not one of the wonders of the great love of God that all holy affections, instead of being absorbed and extinguished, find themselves purified, enlarged, and transfigured in it in such a way that there is no surer warrant of immortality for human love than to be placed under the shadow of the Divine? And have we not a proof of it in St. Paula—that model of Christian

[1] Si, communi lege naturæ, damnat omnes gentilis vidua voluptates, quid expectandum est a viduâ christianâ, quæ pudicitiam suam non solum ei debet qui defunctus est, sed et ei cum quo regnatura est? Tu vero quæ in tumulo mariti sepelisti omnes pariter voluptates, &c.—*Epist.* 85, *Ad Salvinam.*

widows—who, while throwing herself with such ardour, after the death of Toxotius, into the bosom of God, had yet so little forgotten her love for her husband that his remembrance ever brought tears to her eyes!

Such was the object proposed by Jerome to his penitents—evangelical perfection. And what were the best means to attain this end?

Here Jerome did not hesitate. With a logic which good sense and Roman generosity fully entered into and understood he wrote: 'We must have no inconsistencies: a sublime ideal, and then an ordinary life, the dress of a widow, and the habits of a worldly woman. The means must be worthy of the end. Whoever chooses a more perfect life must walk in a more perfect path.[1] Your state is sovereignly free, and that is what makes its merit. Let those who cannot bear it renounce the honour. But, if not, let them fulfil its conditions and its duties.'[2]

Such was the energetic guidance of St. Jerome. He was not a man for compromises or half measures. He bore the souls who placed themselves under his guidance with a steady flight upwards and onwards, and lifted them above all the timidities and hesitations which make themselves felt when it is a question of self-immolation. Never was there a soul, in fact, who would trample more courageously on all human indulgences and repugnances. But to understand all the difficulties he had to contend with we must take one more glance at the state of Rome at that time, and the habits to which women of the

[1] Aut loquendum nobis est ut vestiti sumus, aut vestiendum ut loquimur. Quid aliud pollicemur, et aliud ostendimus? Lingua personat castitatem, et totum corpus præfert impudicitiam.—*Epist. ad Furiam.*

[2] *Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.*

higher classes were almost compelled to submit in the marble palaces in which they lived.

In the first place, the luxury of their mansions was extraordinary: magnificent courtyards, and galleries lined with statues and marble columns; beautiful and richly-painted ceilings; exquisite hangings; the richest furniture of every kind, and priceless articles on every table. Then there were whole troops of slaves: some for the work of the house, some for personal attendance on the owners, some for show only. The toilet of a Roman lady was a *chef-d'œuvre* of art. Women of rank wore no stuffs, but silk or satin, embroidered in gold or transparent tissues, 'which covered the body without clothing it,' as St. Jerome writes. Their dresses were fastened at the waist by girdles of gold, studded with precious stones; their slippers were equally chased and adorned. But what gave the most work to their unhappy slaves and took up the most time was the care of the hair and the face. As to the former, it was raised in a complete edifice, a great deal of false hair being added, which at that time was enormously dear. Then it was dyed gold colour, with a species of dye which St. Jerome called the 'lustre of hell,' but which was then the prevailing fashion, and which heightened the price of German hair, which was the right colour; then came the plaiting and the interlacing of gold braid and jewels, the whole being crowned by a kind of Oriental mitre or tiara. Afterwards came the painting of the eyebrows and the cheeks with rouge and enamel and white.

To this must be added diamond earrings of the finest water, and rings of the same precious stones, with strings of the most beautiful pearls. Such was the ordinary dress of a Roman lady of high birth. But we will suppose she is going out. Her slaves are ready

with her golden litter: others run before to clear the way: multitudes follow after to show her rank, riches, and importance. The porters are to guard against the least irregularity of steps or roughness of ground, for fear of shaking the fine lady whom they bear. Then comes the dinner, of which we will give the account in Jerome's own words.

'I see a whole troop of cooks, who, with their sleeves tucked up like soldiers in a campaign, are preparing and cutting up the meats. And what meats! The rarest and the most juicy. Italian game was not enough: birds and fish must be sent for from immense distances, and at a cost which often brought about the entire ruin of families. . . . Here come the guests. The lady of the house flies from place to place to see if the beds for the guests are soft enough, if the floor is properly swept, if the vases are filled with sufficiently beautiful and expensive flowers; if all the preparations, in fact, are in accordance with her rank. The musicians and buffoons are in their places.' We will leave out this portion of Jerome's description, which shows us how Pagan corruptions invaded even Christian society.

'Ah!' continues the Chalcis hermit, 'tell me, if you please, is God in all this? Can the fear and love of God subsist in the midst of these orgies? What is a Christian wife to do? She cannot do two things: either she must enjoy all this and lose her soul, or else she must protest and have a disagreement with her husband, and throw discord in the family. After an intestine war, then will follow a divorce. And if you can find me a palace free from these disorders, well, all I can say is, that it must be a *rara avis* on the earth!'[1]

To struggle successfully against such abuses, it was

[1] *Contra Helvidium.*

evidently necessary to break with all received customs, and to take refuge in total renunciation and heroic austerities. The glory of St. Jerome consists in having at once understood this, and of his disciples that they generously accepted it. He asked of them nothing less than the entire sacrifice of all the luxury which was usual to women in their position, and which they had formerly allowed themselves. Beautiful dresses, jewels, all those little delicacies so natural and so much prized by feminine vanity were to be given up.

'When you lived as the great ladies of this age,' he wrote, 'you loved what the fashion of the day allowed. You liked to paint your faces, to dress your hair in all kinds of extravagant ways, to build up a tower of false hair; without speaking of those ear-rings, those pearls from the Red Sea, those beautiful green emeralds, those fiery rubies, those azure sapphires which are a sort of passion to some matrons. Well, in renouncing the life of this century you must likewise renounce all these things. Oh!' he exclaimed indignantly, warming with his subject, 'what place on the face of a Christian woman have rouge and enamel, those indications of an immortified and sensual soul? How will she weep for her sins when her tears must make a furrow through the layers of paint on her cheeks, and when she dare to appear before her Creator with a face which He could not recognise?'[1]

He thundered with equal vehemence against the luxury of Roman tables, to which the whole universe at that time paid tribute.

[1] Quid facit in facie Christianæ purpurissus et cerussa, ignis juvenum, fomenta libidinum, impudicæ mentis indicia? Quomodo fiere poterit pro peccatis suis quæ lacrymis cutem nudat, et sulcos ducit in facie? . . . Quâ fiduciâ erigit ad cœlum vultus quos conditor non agnoscit.—*Epist. ad Furiam.*

'Far be from you,' he writes, 'those birds of Phocia, those fat ring-doves, those Ionian pheasants—all those dishes, in fact, which fly away with vast properties; farther still the roe-deer and the wild-boar, and all those rich and costly meats! From all such extravagant and useless luxuries you must henceforth abstain.'[1]

Abstinence and fasting were the habitual practices he recommended to these opulent and delicate patricians. In the face of such excesses, he saw only that remedy, if they were to attain to the heroic virtues to which they aspired. He wrote:—

'As long as we are in this tabernacle, surrounded by mortal flesh, we may conquer and moderate our desires, but we cannot destroy them. It is difficult, if not impossible, for any of us to ignore the beginnings of passion. All flesh has such tendencies, and tempts the soul with the bait of human pleasure. I tell you these things that you may realise the human nature which is in you, and that you may know that these common temptations will assail you also, unless you are perpetually on your guard. Whether we wear silk or stuff we have the same concupiscences. Such inclinations are found as truly under the purple of kings as under the rags of the poor.'[2]

'To conquer avarice,' he used to say, 'we must open our purses; to calumny and a back-biting tongue we must oppose silence; to vanity and a taste for foolish expenditure, a generous movement towards helping

[1] *Epist. ad Salvinam.*

[2] Difficile est, quin potius impossibile, perturbationum initiis carere quempiam. Omnis caro concupiscit ea quæ carnis sunt, et quibusdam illecebris ad mortiferas animam voluptates trahit. Quorsum ista? Ut hominem te esse noveris, et passionibus humanis nisi caveris subjacere. De eodem cuncti facti sumus luto; in serico et in pannis eadem libido dominatur.—*Epist. ad Salvinam.*

others. All these sins are on the outside of us, as it were, and so are easily conquered; but voluptuousness is from within, and needs severer measures.'

To these lessons, drawn from his thorough knowledge of human nature, he added the results of his own experience; and to prove how necessary it was to strive and watch continually against our inclinations, he quoted some of the lamentable falls which had lately saddened the Church, and lashed other more secret vices with that powerful satire which he knew so well how to use when necessary. But how did Jerome persuade his disciples to accept such a life of renunciation and sacrifice? By setting before them the perishable nature of all earthly pleasures, and unveiling to them, with the eye of faith, the boundless horizons of eternity and the love of God. 'It is easy to despise the things of time,' he said, 'when we are face to face with death.'[1] Marcella had admired that beautiful thought of Plato's, 'Life should be a meditation on death.' But St. Jerome quoted a more profound word of St. Paul's: 'Yes, it is beautiful to live, always having death before our eyes; but it is a finer thing to do like the Apostle, who "died daily." It is a grander thought "*to die in order to live.*"'

This is the great secret of Christian virtue—that whole life of sacrifice which the Apostle calls *mortification*, which is a death indeed, but a death which conceals true life. Also Jerome was perpetually repeating those words of St. Paul: 'For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory.' But the strength, the sweetness which overcame all was love. 'Love,' exclaimed St. Jerome, 'makes everything easy

[1] Facile contemnit omnia, qui se semper cogitat esse moriturum.—*Epist.* 51, *Ad Paulinum.*

and sweet. Where love is, there is no toil, and no pain.' [1] 'In giving all to God, we have found more than we left. What we have given up is small; what we have found is infinite.' [2] The love of God was therefore the first motive whereby St. Jerome encouraged his spiritual children to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. The love of the poor was the second. As a compensation for their renunciation of the luxuries and extravagances of a worldly life, he set before them the image of Jesus Christ in His poor and suffering members, and showed them what was the intense happiness of being able to relieve their wants. 'Since you have accepted the positions of Christ's spouses,' he would say, 'your riches are no longer your own, for they belong to our Lord. You possess only that which you have employed in charity.' [3] But to give of our substance to the poor is only the first degree of charity. *To give oneself* is the second. And it was to this that St. Jerome exhorted his noble penitents. He wished that the fruit of their austerities and renunciation of this world's luxury should be to raise them above all the prejudices of custom and all the repugnances of nature to practise heroic charity. Hospitals for the sick poor were then unknown in Rome, though they began to be opened in the East; and in the absence of such institutions and the total neglect of the old Pagans for physical infirmities, these poor wretches died in miserable holes and corners, untended and uncared for, or exposed their infirmities in a hideous fashion in the

[1] Nihil amantibus durum est; nullus difficilis cupienti labor est.—*Epist.* 19, *Ad Eustochium.*

[2] Plus accepimus quam dedimus. Parva dimisimus, et grandia possidemus.—*Epist.* 54, *Ad Pammachium.*

[3] Ex quo virginitati perpetua consecrata es, tua non tua sunt: imo vera tua, quia Christi esse cœperunt; scitura nihil te habituram, nisi quod in bonis operibus erogaveris.—*Epist.* 97, *Ad Demitriadem.*

streets. Christianity had secretly done a great deal to relieve this misery, but could not remove it altogether. There were, besides, many Christian ladies who gave largely to the poor, but through the hands of others. They had not the courage to go and have personal contact with them.

'I do not impute it to them as a crime,' wrote St. Jerome: 'it is a natural result of the delicacy with which they have been brought up. But I admire far more one who can raise herself above such considerations. Strong faith overcomes the disgust which poor human nature feels at the sight of repulsive objects. That poor man who fills us with disgust, the very sight of whom turns our stomachs, is yet our brother. Nay more, it is Jesus Christ Himself, poor, naked, and miserable, who is dying of hunger at our door!'[1]

The love of God and of His poor—these were the substitutes which St. Jerome proposed to his penitents in place of worldly pleasures and frivolities. We may add to this the pure and holy friendship which united these noble widows and virgins, and which is one of the charms of the picture before us. Some people imagine that a life of devotion and self-abnegation is incompatible with tenderness of feeling or home love. But, on the contrary, we shall see that Paula and her companions were eminent for the strength of their natural affections. I do not believe it possible to find on earth a stronger or more devoted friendship than that which existed between Paula and Marcella to the end; or a

[1] Teneritudinem animi nequaquam interpretor infidelitatem; sed sicut imbecillitati stomachi veniam tribuo, sic perfectæ mentis ardorem in cœlos fero. Magna fides ista contemnit. Ille quem despicimus, quem videre non possumus, nostri similis est.—*Epist.* 84, *Ad Oceanum.* Christus nudus ante fores moritur. *Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.*

more faithful and tender heart than that of St. Jerome, who outwardly appeared so severe and hard. The fact is, that religion purifies and raises human love, without extinguishing it. On the contrary, by shutting the heart against all that might weaken or profane it, the power of loving is increased and strengthened.

But Jerome was not content with awakening the life of the heart; he determined also to build upon the ruins of frivolity and worldliness a spirit of intellectual intelligence by cultivating as far as possible the minds of his spiritual children. His great text-book, as we have already seen, was the Bible; and he imposed the study of it on Paula, Marcella, Eustochium, and the rest as a daily duty, and insisted on their learning some verses of it every morning by heart. 'To the care of fine clothes, jewels, and the like, substitute the Holy Scriptures,' he wrote, 'and do not seek for beautiful bindings and illuminations, but choose such copies as have the best and most correct text.'[1] But the Bible was not the only book recommended by St. Jerome to his disciples, although he was very particular that their reading should be of a good and solid kind. 'For why should you search for gold in the mud,' he exclaimed, 'when you have real pearls under your hand!'[2] Among the books most strongly recommended by him were the works of Origen and St. Athanasius, of Tertullian and St. Cyprian, of St. Hilary of Poictiers, and of St. Ambrose, especially his treatise on virginity. St. Augustine's 'Confessions' had not been written at that time, for

[1] Amorem monilium atque gemmarum transfer ad scientiam Scripturarum.—*Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.*

[2] Post Scripturas sanctas doctorum hominum tractatus lege, eorum duntaxat quorum fides nota est. Non necesse habes aurum in luto quærere; multis margaritis unam redime margaritam.—*Epist.* 57, *Ad Furiam.*

he was not yet a Christian. On one occasion, Marcella wanted to read the Commentaries of Rheticius, bishop of Autun, on the Gospel of St. Matthew; but St. Jerome refused her permission on the ground that the arguments were too weak for a person with a mind like hers. Piety, in fact, as St. Jerome understood it, was not a narrow and bigoted spirit, but a wide and comprehensive system calling forth all the powers of mind and soul. 'There are some people,' he writes, 'who think to hide their ignorance under the mask of piety. But this sort of religion, though it may do for the individual, can neither edify nor help others. The souls of the faithful are the temples of Jesus Christ. Must one not then ornament that temple in order to make it worthy of such a guest? Therefore women should do their utmost to improve their minds, and to learn all they can; not what is vain and fleeting, but what is solid and will last to all eternity. Then will they become able champions for God and His Church.' [1]

We cannot refrain here from remarking the contrast between the lives of most women in the present day and those of St. Paula and her companions. What, in reality, is the occupation of most of our great ladies who live in the world? Where shall we find, I do not say austerity, but any sort of recollection—the life of the soul? Those who read at all—what do they read? Certain absurd prejudices and conventionalities narrow their education; and a sensible woman who wishes to escape from the frivolities around her is looked upon

[1] Tam crassæ rusticitatis quam illi solam pro sanctitate habent. . . . Sancta rusticitas solum sibi prodest, et quantum ædificat ex vitæ merito ecclesiam Christi, tantum nocet si destruentibus non resistat. . . . Verum Christi templum anima credentis est; illam exorna, illam vesti, in illâ Christum suscipe. . . . Discamus in terris, etc.—*Epist.* 49, 50, *Ad Paulinum.* Cf. *Epist.* 25, *Ad Marcellam.*

with something very like contempt. Why should there be a barrier to any thorough study by women? Why should they not, at least, be grounded well? Why, for instance, should not young ladies who have leisure learn —I will not say Hebrew and Greek, like Paula and Eustochium—but Latin, the root of most of our modern languages, the tongue of the Church, which M. le Maistre asserts any intelligent person may learn in six months? When we see what may be done by women who really cultivate their minds; with what admirable gifts God has endowed them; what quickness and delicacy of perception; what exquisite taste; what astonishing penetration; what exalted sentiments; what an amount of power—when we see all this, I repeat, how can we do otherwise than mourn over their miserable, incomplete education, in which nothing is taught them properly; so that when they grow up, and take their places in the world, unless they have energy and time enough to study and form fresh habits, their whole lives are a useless void? How is it possible not to deplore such a waste of the highest gifts, caused mainly by the intolerable tyranny of a stupid and disastrous prejudice? Even in their piety this imperfect education makes itself felt: there is nothing great, earnest, or deep in their faith; everything is on the surface—a kind of sentimentality, without a solid knowledge of religion; without any understanding of their real duties; without any certain practice or enlightened guidance; and the consequence of which is those inconsistencies, those tamperings with conscience which make some women's devotion a matter of reproach and ridicule to those around them. The piety of the illustrious Roman ladies of whom we have been speaking was very different; but then it sprang from a deeper source.

These serious studies St. Jerome called the food of prayer. And prayer was, as we have before said, the great occupation of those lives, freed as they were from the useless nothings which fill up the time of women in the world.

But as one cannot read and pray all day, St. Jerome would have them fill up the intervening time by manual labour of some sort. Women must use their hands as well as their heads and hearts, if they are to deserve the praise accorded in Holy Writ to the 'valiant woman.' 'She hath put out her hand to strong things, and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle.' Jerome rigorously insisted on this labour of the hands to the descendants of the Scipios, and that for four reasons: first, to avoid *ennui*, that weight of worldly lives; then, because it is a duty, even for those to whom God has given the gift of riches; next, because work can be a precious aid to charity; and, lastly, because nothing contributes more to domestic happiness than some such occupation. St. Jerome writes: 'When the hours set apart for the study of Holy Scripture and of prayer are over—when, in fact, the care of your soul has often brought you on your knees—always have some work in your hands: spin, weave, sew, knit, or stretch what others have spun, on the frame. Do it carefully and well, unpick what is ill-done, and prepare fresh work when that is completed. If you are thus occupied the days will never seem too long; even the summer evenings will appear to you short, for your task will never be done.' He adds these remarkable words: 'By doing this, you will save not only your own souls, but those of others.' Why? St. Jerome explains: 'You will save yourselves, because you will avoid the danger pointed out in Holy Scripture: "The idle soul is filled with restless desires." For if a

woman thinks she may be dispensed from working, because, by the grace of God, she wants for nothing, she is mistaken. She must work like the rest of the world; and while her hands are occupied, her soul, if she be a good Christian, will still think of God. Her eyes may be fixed on her work, but her heart will be lifted up to heaven.' But how can she thus save others? 'In this way: by being the model of a virtuous life and an example of constant industry, which others will follow and imitate. I say more. If even you were to distribute all your goods to feed the poor, nothing would have so great a price in God's sight as the work done by yourselves either for your own use, or to give an example to others, or to offer to your mother or your grandparents, who will give you largely in exchange, to enable you to relieve the sufferings of the poor and miserable.'

We feel as if there were a delicate and beautiful thought in these words. What! is the work of a woman's hands even above charity itself? Yes; because such work is not only a substitution of something useful for something useless, but it is also a touching tribute of respect from a child to a mother—a domestic occupation, sanctifying the home, while it is at the same time the consolation of the poor and a powerful auxiliary to charity. That is why St. Jerome wished to encourage the young girl or the young widow to work diligently in her own home, and under the shelter of a mother or a grandmother's roof; for he felt that there she would find virtue and the fruit of virtue, which is happiness.

Such was the direction of St. Jerome—that grand Christian direction which is thus presented to us for the first time in history, and which Paula only too eagerly accepted from him. Those careful instructions; those

high and ennobling views of the dignity of a soul consecrated to Jesus Christ; that austere discipline of which faith and common sense made her see the reason; that detachment from all things here below of which she had so cruelly felt the vanity and fleeting nature; the new light thrown by him upon Holy Scripture, filling her soul with strength and sweetness; the pure joys of prayer; the self-abnegation and self-devotion engendered by the charity for which she thirsted; that great love of God, in one word, which filled her soul with so ardent a flame—all this, answering as it did to the deepest needs of her own heart, is it to be wondered at that Paula embraced St. Jerome's rule with thankfulness and joy? His words, which she felt came direct from God, were at once her light and her strength. She now saw clearly the reason for that which hitherto she had done solely from the inspiration of faith; and feeling a thorough confidence in the guide which Providence had sent her, she walked with greater security in the narrow path she had chosen, and felt herself strengthened against the temptations and oppositions of the world around her, while she was fuller than ever of holy desires, zeal, and fervour. She experienced, in fact, all that holy ardour which made St. Francis of Sales exclaim, in speaking of another young and nobly-born widow, in a like position, and only thirty-three years of age, Madame de Chantal, '*She will become another St. Paula.*' St. Jerome himself is at a loss how to express the kind of passion she showed for austerities, prayer, and the fruitful study of Holy Scripture. He writes: 'Fasting seemed to be her life; continence and mortification of all sorts were her delight. Her songs were psalms and hymns of praise, and her only study, the Holy Scriptures.'[1]

[1] Cujus canticum psalmi, sermo evangelium, delicia continentia, vita jejunium.—*Epist.* 38, *Ad Asellam.*

But the greatest expansion in her soul was in favour of charity. St. Jerome had told her not to fear dressing the wounds of the poor, and serving them with her own hands; and so the world saw this delicately-nurtured lady—brought up amidst such luxury that formerly she shrank from putting her foot to the ground—walking vigorously through the Roman streets, no longer borne by her slaves in a gilt litter, but humbly, on foot, in the most wretched quarters of the town, seeking for all the hidden misery she could find. To one she would bring clothes; to another food; to a third, sick-comforts and remedies; for if she had a preference, it was for the sick. When Paula found any poor creatures covered with sores, the very sight of whom made other people turn away in disgust, she would take them up in her arms, make their beds, give them medicines, wash their wounds, and even sometimes suck the matter from their ulcers. When she heard that any one was on the point of death, she would fly to their bedsides, and, without being frightened at the sight of their sufferings, would speak to them of God and heaven, stop the murmurs or blasphemies on their lips, give hope to their trembling souls, and help them by a good death to prepare for a better life. And when her patients had expired, she would wash their bodies, reverently prepare them for sepulture, and accompany them to their last resting-place. And if Marcella or Fabiola, who were her rivals in charitable works, by any chance arrived first, Paula would complain and feel as if she had suffered a great loss. What grand and noble actions were thus done secretly by this daughter of the Scipios in some miserable quarter of the Suburra or the Esquiline, the world will never know! But St. Jerome's emotion supplements many things which he only half describes.

'What shall I say,' he exclaims, 'of the way in which everything in that magnificent home was lavished on the poor!—how describe that universal charity which made her love and care for such a multitude of unknown souls! Find me the poor corpse which was not laid out in a shroud sent by Paula, or the sick and suffering body whom she had not relieved. She hunted them out with a holy zeal in the most abandoned quarters of the city, and thought herself ill-used if their sufferings or hunger had been relieved by other hands than her own.'[1]

Such was the triumph of the love of Jesus Christ in the heart of this descendant of the Scipios and the Gracchi, this delicately-reared and opulent patrician. The saints of both sexes in later ages have accustomed us to a like heroism; but in those days it was the first time it had burst forth in the world, side by side with Roman luxury and Pagan corruption. How such acts, done by such women, in such a century, must have borne witness to the reality of the new and glorious faith they professed, and must have struck those souls who were disposed to reflect on the reason of such things!

'Was it not, in truth, a noble sight to see the inheritors of those glorious names of Pagan Rome, the daughters of the Scipios, the Marcelli, the Camilli, devoting themselves in this way to works of superhuman charity, and sacrificing their treasures, their beauty, and their youth to succour the poor and sick; as if, by a worthy expiation, Providence chose the consolers of oppressed humanity from the very midst of the families whose glories had oppressed the world?'[2]

[1] *Epitaphium Paulæ.*

[2] M. Villemain, *Tableau de l'Éloquence Chrétienne au IVe Siècle.*

CHAPTER V.

ST. PAULA AND HER CHILDREN—BLESILLA, PAULINA, AND EUTOCHIUM.

(382–384.)

But Paula was a mother; and the extraordinary ardour with which she gave herself up, under the direction of St. Jerome, to this life of austerity, study, prayer, and charity could not make her forget what she owed to her young family and to the five orphan children who were growing up around her.

We remember once having gone into one of those old Gothic country houses—the remains of the Middle Ages—which was inhabited by a young and noble widow lady, living alone with her little children; and we have never forgotten the impression made upon us in those vast apartments by seeing in them only this young woman, in her deep mourning, surrounded by her orphans. We felt, more vividly than we can find words to say, what there was of sacred sorrow in that soul, and to what a sublime and awful task the life of that young widow was devoted, in the charge of those four children, whose future depended entirely on their mother. But we knew also the depths of faith and virtue in the soul of that Christian mother, and we did not fear but that she would come up to the full requirements of her sacred mission.

This happy task of such widows as God has left with

children became the sad consolation and at the same time the great object of Paula's life. God had given her that compensation which arose from the charm of her children's characters and the rare gifts with which He had endowed them—gifts which are often so great a peril in the education of children, and a cause of anxiety to all mothers who, like Paula, have, above all, at heart the souls of their offspring. These children of hers, who had given such early promise of good, were now growing up. The eldest and cleverest, Blesilla, had, with a certain delicacy of health, an ardent and impassioned nature: she was quick, brilliant, and intelligent, with an extraordinary penetration which delighted St. Jerome Her nature was bright and gay, and fond of pleasure. She possessed, in fact, all those qualities which charm and yet alarm an anxious mother. She was only fifteen when her father died, and seventeen when St. Jerome first arrived in Rome, so that at the time of which we are now speaking she was in the very flower of her youth and beauty. Every one was astonished at her memory, her quickness of perception, and the correctness of her speech. Everything came easy to her in the way of learning, so that her lessons were like play to her. She spoke both Greek and Latin with perfect purity.[1] Paula, who felt all the dangers which arise from such a temperament, had striven to counterbalance all this brilliancy by solid piety. But Blesilla, although capable of the highest virtues, was far too much engrossed by the splendours of her position and the luxurious home in which she had been brought up, to think of such things.

[1] Quis transeat nitorem linguæ, memoriæ tenacitatem, acumen ingenii? Si græce loquentem audisses, latine eam nescire putares. Si in romanum sonum lingua se verteret, nihil omnino peregrini sermo redolebat.—*Epist.* 22, *Ad Paulam.*

Like most young girls of her rank, she loved dress, parties, and balls; for neither the death of her father nor the example of her mother had succeeded in detaching her heart from the love of the world—not even the more grievous trial of early widowhood. For, married very young, according to Roman usage for persons of high birth like herself, and united to one of the richest and noblest of the patrician families of the race of the Camilli—*i.e.* to the son of that admirable Titiana whom we have before mentioned as a disciple of St. Jerome's—she had been left a widow after only seven months of married happiness, and that without children. But even these repeated blows had not destroyed the charm. Her life, so inopportunely wrecked, might be renewed. Paula, who felt all the dangers to which her widowed child was exposed, and who knew all the latent strength and generosity of her soul, earnestly wished her to take the same course as she herself had done, and give up all idea of a second marriage. But such was not Blesilla's attraction, nor the wish of her family. After a few months of sorrow and mourning, the love of pleasure regained its sway over the mind of the young widow. She prayed little enough, but spent hours before her looking-glass, devising new and beautiful dresses, surrounded by her slaves, who were continually employed in arranging her hair in some new or artistic fashion. The softest couch seemed hard to her luxurious self-indulgence; while her whole time was spent in going to balls and fêtes, for dancing was her passion. Such was Blesilla at the time when St. Jerome first became known to Paula. And the only thing to be done was to try and convert her.

Paulina, who was Paula's second daughter, was a great contrast to her sister. She was less brilliant, but not less amiable, and endowed with many rare and

striking qualities. If Blesilla was quick, frivolous, and ardent, Paulina was calm, grave, and gentle. Her most remarkable quality consisted in a sound common sense, which was combined with great sweetness of temper. Less worldly than Blesilla, and less fond of gaiety, she still did not show any very decided inclination towards piety. Everything was harmonious in her nature; but nothing betrayed a soul called to any high or peculiar destiny. Her vocation was evidently to lead an ordinary life in the world. She was between fifteen and sixteen; and the best thing to do for her was to find her a good and sensible husband, which Paula, with her strong faith and motherly wisdom, had long ago perceived and determined to bring about, without, however, going before the Divine intentions as regarded her children, but waiting patiently for the right moment.

The flower of Paula's flock, however, was her third daughter, Eustochium. She was sweetness and gentleness itself, with a remarkable combination of innocence and piety. Her strongest characteristic was her passion for her mother. She never willingly left her side; saw and felt everything as she did, and was moulded in the same model. When Marcella, who was so much struck with her admirable dispositions, had asked to have her for a time, to bring her up with the other young virgins in her own house, Eustochium went gladly to the Aventine, where Marcella kept her in her own room, and covered, as it were, with her wings the darling child of her greatest friend. When she gave her back to Paula, Eustochium devoted herself more than ever to her mother—like the young vine, as it grows, clings the closer to the elm-branch which serves as its support. She never went anywhere without her, and her great joy was to accompany her in her visits either to the

Catacombs or to the Basilicas, and, most of all, to the sick and suffering poor. This pure and innocent child had, in fact, but one desire—that of imitating her mother and consecrating herself wholly and entirely to the service of God in holy virginity. Gentle and silent, but hiding under this veil of modesty and intelligence very much above the average, and under a fragile and delicate appearance, a strength capable of the greatest things—such was Eustochium. She was not fifteen at the time of the arrival of St. Jerome; but like a half-opened flower, she already revealed a portion of the treasures hidden in that pure and noble heart. The question only was, How best to lead this evident vocation and to preserve for Jesus Christ a virgin soul whom He had manifestly chosen for His spouse, but the possession of which was to be warmly disputed?

Rufina, being only between eleven and twelve years old, was not yet at the age when a mother's gravest anxieties begin. But Toxotius was already a source of anxious solicitude to her. He had not at that time received holy baptism, which in those days was frequently deferred; and now his paternal uncle, Hymetius, an ardent Pagan, whom we have before mentioned, and who was the legal guardian of Paula's children, had his own views as to the education of his nephew. Paula hoped earnestly to make her son a fervent Christian some day; but in the meantime the position, as regarded him, was one full of difficulty and the source of mortal anguish to his mother.

Such was the young family of our saint, and such the work laid upon her for these five children. Fortunately, she found in St. Jerome and in Marcella two inappreciable helpers and guides in this arduous task. Besides their wonderful affinity in mind and feelings, of which

we have spoken, and his admiration of her virtue, these five orphans round her, so interesting in their different ways, had from the first attracted St. Jerome to Paula, and deepened the sympathy and devotion of this ascetic monk. He at once understood the gravity of the mother's mission, and, together with Marcella, resolved to do his utmost to strengthen and help her.

At that moment her gravest anxiety was on account of Blesilla. Paula could not bear to see her wasting the rare gifts with which Nature had endowed her in worldly frivolities, as well as the best years of a life which threatened to be as brilliant as it would be short. For every one was struck at the contrast which existed between that fragile frame and the fiery soul it contained, except Blesilla herself, who never dreamt of her delicacy of constitution, and, with the thoughtlessness of youth, gave herself up to every kind of amusement. She had no taste whatever for her mother's austere rule of life. She loved the world and courted its caresses; nor was it possible to make her feel the peril of an existence, shielded, it is true, from grievous sins, but utterly frivolous and empty in the sight of God. Paula looked upon life from a totally different point of view, and could not feel herself at liberty to neglect the soul of her child by merely saving her from scandalous falls without setting before her a higher standard. St. Jerome, on his side, had no sooner become well acquainted with Blesilla than he was enchanted with her natural gifts and extraordinary abilities; and at the same time felt the necessity of dragging her, if possible, from the worldliness around her, and striving to make her turn her great talents to a better account.

But in vain did he strive to lead her to more serious thoughts: to make her understand the dignity of widow-

hood, and to show her the contrast between Christian widows like her mother and her friend—'who were the honour of the Church and the confusion of the Gentiles'—and the Pagan ladies, whom she resembled, 'who painted their faces, decked themselves with silks, gold, and precious stones, and, instead of weeping for the husbands they had lost, sought only how to attract fresh ones.'[1] Blesilla was in no way touched by his representations, and disliked both his preachings and the austere monk himself; so that the work of her conversion was, for two more years, to be the cause of unceasing anxiety and torment to her mother.

What was more simple and easier to bring about was the establishment of Paulina. Providence here came in aid of Paula's wishes. There was in Marcella's family a man of a certain age, and a most fervent Christian, whom we have mentioned before as assisting at St. Jerome's lectures on the Holy Scriptures on the Aventine—the Senator Pammachius. St. Jerome calls him 'the most Christian of all the noble Romans, and the most noble of Christians.'[2] He was the old and faithful friend of our saint. They were of the same age, and had known each other intimately when they frequented the school of Victorinus.[3] Together they would take long walks to the Catacombs, as St. Jerome has related. Their studies at an end, the two friends separated, to follow widely different paths—Pammachius to take the place to which his birth and station called him; and St. Jerome to the desert. They met again at Rome, both

[1] Confusa est gentilitas dum omnibus patuit quæ esset viduitas Christiana. . . . Illæ enim solent purpurisso et cerussâ ora depingere, sericis nitere vestibus, splendere gemmis, maritos ita plangere ut quærant alios.—*Epist.* 86, *Ad Principiam.*

[2] *Epist.* 54, *Ad Pammachium.*

[3] Preface of the *Commentary on Osee.*

equally faithful to the faith of their youth, Pammachius having taken his seat in the Senate, and Jerome having become a priest and an illustrious interpreter of Holy Writ. This was a fresh link between the two friends; for Pammachius was one of those serious natures who delight in a deep study of religious works. Such was the man to whom Paula, together with Jerome and Marcella, determined to give her second daughter, the gentle and amiable Paulina. Pammachius's age was the sole objection; but it did not weigh with a mind as reasonable as Paulina's against the weighty reasons in favour of this marriage—namely, the high character of the man himself, their similitude in tastes and ideas, both with herself and with her mother and Marcella, and also the hope of counteracting the pernicious Pagan influence of Hymetius over her young brother Toxotius. The marriage, therefore, took place, to the great delight of the whole family and also of St. Jerome, whose affection for Pammachius made him rejoice in the new link which had connected his friend with one of Paula's daughters.

Eustochium in the meantime followed perseveringly the path which she had marked out for herelf. This 'flower of virgins,' as St. Jerome called her, went on expanding and blossoming more sweetly day by day, under the tender guidance of her mother. In vain her elder sisters appeared before her sparkling with gold and jewels; her vocation for the religious life became more decided every day; and at last Paula, yielding to her persistence and perseverance, presented her to Pope Damasus to receive from his hands the Virgin's veil. The pious child came back to her mother's house more happy and more radiant in her white veil and sober brown dress than Blesilla on the day when she had

entered the palace of her young and noble husband Furius, in all the splendour of her wedding finery. This proceeding on Eustochium's part made a tremendous sensation in Rome, and redoubled the irritation of the family against Paula. Hymetius especially, who had formed matrimonial projects for his niece, and had to bear the brunt of all the malicious sneers and insinuations of Prœtaxtatus and his Pagan friends on the subject, was to the last degree exasperated. But Paula could only rejoice in the holy dispositions and growing fervour of her child. In spite of her youth, not one of the virgins on the Aventine could surpass Eustochium in assiduity, in prayer, and the chanting of the Psalms, or in the eagerness with which she followed the instructions of St. Jerome in the field of the Holy Scriptures which he had opened to them. Not even the study of Hebrew deterred her; and St. Jerome soon conceived for the child, as for the mother, a singular reverence and respectful devotion. It was not possible, however, that Paula should not occasionally be filled with serious anxiety as to the future, for besides the opposition she met with in her own family, she saw the rising of a furious storm in Rome, not only against herself, but against the whole movement towards the religious life in favour of which St. Jerome was leading so many of the patrician families. It was the struggle of the family and the world against virginity and the cloisters, which was then beginning and has ever since continued.

After all, what else could be expected? It was impossible, in such a capital as Rome, that such ideas should not meet with opposition, or that the practice of the Evangelical counsels should be publicly organised without a violent outcry. The Pagan portion of the patricians could not understand it; all the ideas of the

old Romans who had honoured the fecundity of matrons as a virtue, and made laws against celibacy, were thereby overthrown. Even the patrician Christians could not help looking with something of contempt on the coarse monkish habit, which, besides, had certainly not always honoured those who wore it in Rome. Those, however, were recognised abuses; the real question lay deeper, and was of a nature to disturb all classes and sexes. The spirit which moved these patrician ladies to embrace so austere a life: was it right and true? or was it not rather an excess, a deviation from Christian simplicity? and, in its contempt for innocent pleasures, was there not a secret Manicheism? Others asked themselves whether, after all, the monastic state were not superior to the secular, nearer to perfection, and breathing more courageously the spirit of the Evangelical counsels.

All of a sudden, in the midst of these discussions, appeared a little book, which made a great sensation in Rome by the audacity of its attacks. Its author was Helvidius. He went to the root of the question. He sapped the very base of the principle on which the excellence of virginity rested, by denying that Mary remained ever a virgin, and striving to prove it by certain texts from Holy Scripture. Then, after an eloquent panegyric on the holy institution of marriage, he asked the partisans of virginity if they thought themselves superior to the holy patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Afterwards, with a sophistry common to such pamphleteers, he attempted to destroy all veneration for the monastic state by exposing the sins of false monks and nuns who made their religious habit a cloak for intemperance and the lowest vices. The book was, besides, filled with treacherous insinuations against St. Jerome himself, as the great promoter of virginity.

The scandal was great, and the consequent panic among the widows and virgins on the Aventine, who found themselves so cruelly attacked and wounded by injurious reflections on all they held most dear. The book had a tremendous run in Rome, delighting not only the Pagans, but all those who had a secret leaning towards Arianism, and wished to lower the position of the Mother of God. Every lax and tepid Christian likewise applauded it, so that Paula implored Jerome to write an answer. At first he refused: his Biblical studies seemed to him too important to be neglected or set aside for such an ephemeral attack. But Paula and Marcella proved to him that the questions thus raised deserved an answer; that it was nothing more nor less than the epicurism which strove for mastery in the Church over the great spirit of Christianity. Jerome, thus urged, took up his pen. His answer was short, brilliant, and decisive, proving how formidable an adversary Helvidius had provoked. He overwhelmed him with Biblical quotations to prove the falsehood of his text, and proved beyond dispute that those who are termed in the Gospel the *brothers* of Jesus Christ are not so in the strict sense, but in that which is so often given to the word in Holy Scripture; that they were simply his cousins, sons of Mary, sister of the Blessed Virgin, and called in the Gospel, Mary Cleophas, or Mary the wife of Alpheus. One of his arguments was drawn from the words of Our Lord to His mother and St. John on the cross: 'Woman, behold thy son: son, behold thy mother.' 'Miserable disputer!' exclaimed St. Jerome, 'out of thine own words will I judge thee. Thou sayest that His mother was at the foot of the cross, and that it was not to leave her alone that He gave her St. John as her son. But why this precaution if she had already four sons and daughters,

as thou dost assert?' Then, indignant at the impudence of Helvidius, he compares his attempt at defaming the character of the Blessed Virgin to the famous sacrilege recorded in antiquity, which set fire to the Temple of Diana. 'There was in old times a miserable wretch, who, being unable to make himself notorious, determined for that purpose to set fire to the Temple of Diana; and as no one, unhappily, saw him commit the act, he ran on the public square with a torch in his hand, crying out, "I did it!" Seized and questioned by the magistrates as to the motive of his proceeding, he replied, "Not being able to attain to any distinction by well-doing, I hoped to make my name illustrious by a crime." So thou, Helvidius, more impious than Erostratus, hast dared to attack the Temple of the Lord and profane the Sanctuary of the Holy Ghost.'[1] There is a beautiful expression further on in St. Jerome's pamphlet in answer to an odious sentence of Helvidius on the humiliating consequences of the Incarnation of the Saviour. 'Ah! the lower He has descended for me and for my salvation, the more love do I owe Him. Speak of humiliation as thou wilt, Helvidius, but wilt thou find anything more ignominious than the Cross? Yet this Cross, we confess it, we believe in it; it is our hope and our joy, and it is this Cross which to-day triumphs over the whole world.'

After this first part of his triumphant answer, St. Jerome passes to the main point in dispute, *i.e.* the excellence of virginity, showing, with great force and yet delicacy, the distinction between the spirit of the ancient and modern law, and quoting in favour of continency

[1] Quanto sunt humiliora quæ pro me passus est, tanto plus ei debeo. Et quum omnia replicaveris, cruce nihil contumeliosius invenies: quam profitemur et credimus, et in quâ de hostibus triumphamus.—*Contra Helvetium.*

the decisive words of St. Paul, from whence he drew this fine definition of a virgin: 'Holy in body and soul, that is the meaning of the word:'[1] for St. Paul says: 'The virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit.' Then, after a formal declaration as to the sanctity of marriage, he drew a contrast between the flattering picture painted by Helvidius, and the real difficulties which awaited Christian women living in the world, especially in the actual state of society. Alluding to Helvetius's railleries against bad monks, he exclaims: 'Is it the fault of virginity that hypocrites usurp its name and sully it by vices foreign to its nature?' As to personal attacks Jerome rather gloried in them than otherwise. In conclusion, he burst forth on the misfortunes of the century and the necessity of seeking a refuge from all these miseries in a higher life. 'The times are at hand of which the Scriptures speak: "Woe to them who are with child and give suck."' 'The harvest is ready; every day we are decimated by war, carried off by disease, drowned by shipwrecks; and yet, fools that we are, we are still fighting for the limits of our heritage! Ah! who shall we find among the elect in these sad days? Those who can present themselves before the Lamb in white robes; that is, all virgin souls.'

This answer was conclusive. Helvidius was crushed, and did not attempt a reply. Paula made Blesilla read this eloquent apology for virginity; but Blesilla was only slightly impressed by it, and went on with her life of worldly pleasure for another year or more, when suddenly, in the summer of 384, the fever, rightly called 'la perniciosa,' seized upon this young girl, who

[1] Virginis definitio, sanctam esse corpore et spiritu.—*Contra Helvetium.*

hovered for a whole month between life and death. Paula was doubly alarmed both for her child's life and for her soul. But it was the moment of God's grace. Seeing death near, Blesilla at last understood the folly of sacrificing everything for a body so soon to become the food of worms. Let us read St. Jerome's description[1]:—

'For thirty days consecutively we saw Blesilla devoured by a burning fever. She was almost lifeless, struggling breathlessly in the arms of death and trembling at the thought of God's judgments. Where, then, was the help of her worldly relations with their vain and purposeless words? What could they do to save her from death, although they could prevent her living for Jesus Christ? But our Lord, seeing her faults were those of youth, of luxury, and of the century in which her lot had been cast, came to her Himself, touched her hand, and, with a heartfelt sigh, cried to her, as to Lazarus: "*Come forth!*" And at this call she rose and understood at once that she owed her life to Him who had given it her back.'

She was just twenty. Then was shown what treasures of grace were hidden in that soul, and how much of supernatural beauty had been lost by her hitherto careless life. Courageously did that young widow 'raise the standard of the Cross of Jesus Christ,' and with the

[1] Blesillam nostram vidimus ardore febrium per triginta ferme dies jugiter æstuasse, ut sciret rejiciendas corporis delicias quod paulo post vermibus exarandum sit. . . . Corpus pene jacebat exanime, et anhelos artus mors vicina quatiebat. Ubi tunc erant auxilia propinquorum? Ubi verba omni inaniora fumo? Venit ad hanc Dominus Jesus, et tetigit manum ejus. Redolebat aliquid negligentiæ et divitiarum fasciis colligata in sæculi jacebat sepulcro. Sed infremuit Jesus et conturbatus spiritu, clamavit dicens: *Blesilla, veni foras!* . . . Scit se vitam ei suam debere qui reddidit.—*Epist.* 29, *Ad Marcellam, super ægrotatione Blesillæ.*

flood of light which had been showered upon her, 'show less sorrow for her widowhood than for the fact that she had ceased to be a virgin.' She who had spent so many hours before in adorning herself and in hunting for every combination of colour which could enhance her beauty, chose for her mirror henceforth the face of God, and repeated confidently those words of the Apostle: 'But we all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image.' 'She, whose slaves had been employed half the morning in arranging her hair in the most artistic fashion, and the shape of whose graceful head had disappeared sometimes under a load of plaits and bands, learnt henceforth that it is enough for a woman to be veiled. She, who grumbled at the inequalities even of a feather-bed and found it difficult to leave her sumptuous couch till late in the day, was now the first to rise, the most vigilant in prayer, the first to sing the Alleluia and join in the praises of God: and often, kneeling on the bare ground, tears would stream down that face which formerly was so carefully rouged and painted. She took to wearing dresses of dark and sombre hue: instead of gold and jewelled waistbands she substituted a girdle of white wool, less to show off her beautiful waist than to keep her dress in its place: her shoes were equally simple: the price which she formerly gave for jewelled sandals and other mundane superfluities was now devoted to the poor.'[1]

Such is the portrait drawn for us by St. Jerome of Blesilla after her conversion.

Thus this ardent nature, once fairly won over to the love of God, sprang forward to the highest summit of perfection. Eustochium and Paula could not show more

[1] *Epist.* 29, *Ad Marcellam, super ægrotatione Blesillæ.*

fervour: and Blesilla became at once distinguished among those holy virgins and heroic women not only by her piety, charity, and acts of penance, but also by her study of the Holy Scriptures and her share in that intellectual life which Jerome so earnestly recommended to his scholars. Her intellect developed itself under his guidance with marvellous rapidity.

To begin with, he had made her study the Book of Ecclesiastes, where the vanity of all things here below is so eloquently set forth: and in his Commentaries on the subject, in presence of her mother and sister, he developed the one principal thought contained in this book, *i.e.* 'that,' in the words of Bossuet, 'all in us is vain and fruitless if we only look to ourselves: but that all is great when viewed in the light and on the side of God.' Blesilla's quick and generous mind thoroughly took in his explanations, and implored Jerome to put them down in writing that they might not be lost; which he immediately undertook to do.

After Ecclesiastes, Jerome made her read through the four Gospels and then the Prophet Isaiah. And that she might enter more fully into the meaning of the sacred text, he advised her strongly to learn Hebrew. This arduous study was a joke to her. 'What all the East had admired in the great Origen was seen in a young girl of twenty: not many months, but a week or two sufficed for her to master the difficulties of that language, and to sing and understand the Psalms in the Hebrew text as easily as Paula her mother.'[1] Her courage was extraordinary, Jerome continues: 'Her steps were still faltering from her serious illness, and her delicate neck seemed scarcely able to bear the weight of her head, while her face was pale and her lips trembled; yet the

[1] *Epist.* 22, *Ad Paulam, super obitu Blesillæ.*

Books of the Prophets or the Gospels were never out of her hands.' [1]

At the same time that she was studying the Sacred Scriptures, she read the works of the best commentators upon them. Origen especially delighted her; and in her ardour she entreated Jerome to translate immediately the twenty-five chapters of Origen on St. Matthew, the five on St. Luke, and the thirty-two on St. John. We shall see how St. Jerome, later on, put his hand to this arduous task.

How can we express Paula's joy at this change which had been wrought in her child? The dearest of her wishes had been fulfilled: she had prayed and wept much: and to her St. Jerome might have addressed the words spoken by a holy bishop to the mother of St. Augustine, and which should be repeated to all mothers weeping and praying for the conversion of their children: 'It is impossible that the child of so many tears should perish!'

Pope Damasus, Marcella, Lea, and other virgins, Pammachius, and all the holy priests, friends of St. Jerome, and St. Jerome himself, who had had so large a share in Blesilla's conversion, associated themselves warmly in her mother's joy and thankfulness. This conversion, moreover, was beyond anything fruitful: the example of Paula's daughters won many imitators, not only among their friends, but among their slaves and subordinates; so that Paula's house became like a convent, and St. Jerome used to call it '*a domestic chapel.*' [2]

[1] Vacillabant ægrotatione gressus et pallentem ac trementem faciem vix collum tene sustinebat, et tamen aut Prophetam aut Evangelium semper in manibus tenebat.—*Epist.* 22, *Ad Paulam, super obitu Blesillæ.*

[2] Quasi ex radice fecundâ multæ simul virgines pullularunt, exemplumque patronæ et dominæ secuta est clientium turba atque famularum. Per omnes domos fervebat virginitatis professio; quarum cum impar

The worldly position of all these young virgins was very different, but their merit before God was the same. Blesilla and Eustochium were only distinguished among them by their greater piety and humility.

But the wrath of all the Pagan and worldly relations of Paula at this state of things was at its height. Hymetius especially did not spare his sister-in-law the harshest words; and treated St. Jerome as the original cause of all this folly. The whole patrician body, and even the people, shared in this feeling. They began to be alarmed at the rapid progress these monastic ideas were making. Determined to brave all this fury courageously, St. Jerome wrote a letter to Marcella, which was widely spread in Rome and read with very different feelings by some, in which he exalts the courage of Blesilla, and answers, with his usual caustic and vigorous pen, the different accusations brought against her and against himself:—

'There has lately happened' (he writes) 'a strange thing in Rome which has scandalised people a good deal: Blesilla has put on garments of a sober hue! Very well, let them take scandal also at St. John the Baptist, the greatest of the children of men, who only wore a raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle about his loins. Another scandal: Blesilla refuses now delicately-cooked dishes! But is there a viler food than locusts, of which the great Precursor partook? Ah! I will tell you who ought to scandalise the eyes of Christians: those who paint their faces and eyebrows with all kinds of colours, who come before us with plaister faces, like idols, whiter

esset in carne conditio, unum erat præmium castitatis.' These were Jerome's words on the occasion of the conversion of young Demetriade; but the same happened on the conversion of Blesilla. Cf. *Epist.* 22, *Ad Paulam*, et *Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.*

than nature, and who, if they happened to shed a tear, would leave a furrow in the paint down their cheeks: those whom advancing years cannot persuade that they are grown old; who erect on their heads a whole edifice of false hair and strive to cover their wrinkles with lying colours to make themselves look young: those who shaking with old age give themselves the airs of young girls in the very midst of a troop of their grandchildren. These are the people who ought to make Christians blush for shame. Now if these serpents, jealous as they are of Blesilla, wish by their flatteries to induce her once more to share with them the forbidden fruit, let her crush them with her heel in the words of the Anathema of Holy Writ: "Get thee behind me, Satan!" that is, enemy. For he is an enemy and no other than Anti-Christ who takes offence at that which Christ Himself has declared to be pleasing to Him. As for ourselves, as we do not wear silk gowns, they think to insult us by calling us monks. Because we avoid the drunkenness and noisy laughter of their feasts they call us kill-joys and morose. As soon as one of our black tunics appears in sight, we hear the cry of the whole street: "There goes an impostor and a Greek!" Very well; say that if you please and a good deal more: let loose against us all your good livers and men of pleasure. Our dear little widow will only laugh at it all, and will not even deign to listen to the croakings of these frogs: does not she know well that her own Lord and Master was called Beelzebub?'

These words were severe and bitter, doubtless; but in reality all that was said and done around her never stopped Blesilla for a moment; and Paula, so far from fearing that her faith would be shaken, had to moderate rather than kindle the fervour of her child. God's

blessing rested visibly on these her daughters. For this poor mother, who had suffered so much, and was to suffer so much again, it was like a lightning flash of happiness between two overwhelming claps of thunder. Blesilla perfectly astonished them all by her piety. Paulina, on the other hand, with her husband, the noble Pammachius, 'worthy from his eminent virtues,' writes St. Jerome, 'to be associated with such noble souls,' were, by their chaste and holy union of thought and mind, perfect models of Christian spouses; while Eustochium, according to St. Jerome's beautiful expression, 'culled none but the flowers of virginity.'[1] St. Jerome, in his Biblical manner, has described this holy mother and her three children, comparing this blessed family to the mysterious car seen by the Prophet Ezekiel drawn by four celestial coursers, four cherubim. 'Their speed was unequal and their colour was different; but their ardour was the same, as well as their marvellous concord, each bent on dragging the same car, without waiting to be goaded by the whip, and always docile to the voice of their guide. And this divine guide was no other than Jesus Christ.'[2]

One thing only was wanted to complete Paula's happiness: her son, the little Toxotius, who was entirely under the influence of his uncle, showed himself violently irritated by his sister's conversion, and manifested his childish hatred of St. Jerome in every possible manner, saying that at least they would never seduce him to

[1] Eustochium virginitatis flores metit. Paula laboriosam viduitatis aream terit. Paulina castum matrimonii cubile servat. Et ut quadrigam domus una emitteret castitatis additur comes vir Pammachius.—*Epist.* 54, *Ad Pammachium.*

[2] Huic quadrigæ Jesus præsidet. Impari cursu, pari animo ad palmam tenditur. Discolores equi, sed voluntate concordes unum aurigæ jugum trahunt, non expectantes flagelli verbera, sed ad vocis hortamenta ferventes.—*Ibid.*

follow such an example.[1] Jerome only smiled at this speech, and promised Paula that before long she would see Toxotius an excellent Christian. The event justified this prophecy.

[1] *Epist. Ad Lætam.* Tillemont, *Mémoires*, tome xii. p. 98.

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER THE CONVERSION OF BLESILLA ST. PAULA REDOUBLES HER FERVOUR—THE LONGING TO VISIT THE HOLY PLACES GROWS IN HER MIND—OPPOSITION WHICH SHE HAS TO ENCOUNTER FROM THOSE AROUND HER—LETTER FROM ST. JEROME TO EUSTOCHIUM.

(384.)

'CUCURRI in viam mandatorum tuorum, quia dilatasti cor meum!' (Psalm cxviii.) This cry of a grateful heart which has received a signal favour from God was that of Paula after watching the triumphs of grace in Blesilla. It was by redoubling her love for God that she strove to pay her debt, and also by multiplying her alms deeds, feeling that what is done for the poor is done for our Lord Himself. She began, therefore, to visit more diligently than ever the most neglected and poorest quarters of the town, accompanied by both Eustochium and Blesilla. Her large income not sufficing for her innumerable charities, she even sold out of her capital to cover the debts thus incurred;[1] and when reproached for thus diminishing the fortunes of her children, she would reply: 'What better inheritance can I leave to them than the blessing of our Lord and of His poor?' But these supernatural views and this blind confidence

[1] Spoliabat filios et inter objurgantes propinquos majorem se eis hæreditatem, Christi misericordiam, dimittere, loquebatur.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

in God could not please her family, and the murmurs against her charities at last broke out into a regular storm. A violent scene took place between her and Hymetius, who reproached her bitterly with neglecting her duties as a mother and robbing her children. It was then that Paula, to silence their reproaches, determined on an heroic act too briefly mentioned by St. Jerome: 'Already dead to the world, she distributed all her property among her children.'[1] We do not know whether she despoiled herself completely for their sakes, or whether she still reserved a portion for her numerous charities. Whatever this expression of St. Jerome's may mean, there is no doubt that she made at this time an heroic sacrifice, and rejoiced at thus bearing a nearer resemblance to our Lord Jesus Christ in His poverty and destitution.

But these family arrangements likewise corresponded with another strong though secret wish of Paula's heart which had gained strength since Blesilla's conversion. A vague uneasiness had come over her; her life, however perfect it might appear to others, seemed to her wasted: she aspired to a still higher degree of perfection, as souls do who have once been touched by the fire of Divine love. A great disgust of Rome and of the world around her had taken possession of her. When she compared her own home with that monastic life in the desert which her intercourse with St. Epiphanius and Paulinus had revealed to her, she felt that the humble attempts made by herself and Marcella and Lea, under the direction of St. Jerome, were but feeble imitations of the reality after which her whole heart aspired. The

[1] Cum omnem substantiolam aut pauperibus dilargita sis, aut filiis ante mortem mundo mortua dederis.—*Epist.* 22, *Ad Paulam, super obitu Blesillæ.*

example of Melania, which was the talk of Rome at that moment, helped to keep her in these dispositions. More than fifteen years ago Melania had left Rome for the East, visited Egypt and its anchorites, studied monastic life at its source, and for the last five years had formed her convent on the Mount of Olives on the same model. Paula envied her happiness: a resting-place like that was all she desired on this earth.

But there was yet another reason. Her meditations on the Sacred Scriptures had been her greatest consolation and her favourite occupation. But to read the books of Holy Writ on the very spots which had inspired them, what an intense pleasure! Jerome had often said to her: 'In the same way that one understands the Greek historians better when one has seen Athens, so one only enters fully into the meaning of the Holy Scriptures when one has seen the sky of Judea and the country of the Prophets, of Jesus Christ, and His Holy Apostles.'

St. Jerome's books, especially his life of St. Paul, that great anchorite of whom St. Anthony exclaimed: 'I have seen John and Elias in the desert!' and his Chalcis letters, burning with enthusiasm for the monastic life, fed this fever in Paula's heart. At first, while her children needed her, and while Paulina was still unmarried and Eustochium uncertain of her vocation, Paula had resolutely driven back all such thoughts; but now these obstacles had been in a great measure removed, and the only struggle in her heart arose from her dread of the separation from her remaining children, that bitter trial to a mother's heart! In his letter to Heliodorus, St. Jerome had vividly described these secret combats of generous souls, and, to strengthen him in a vocation which he thought indubitable, he had

exclaimed to his friend: 'If your own father should lie across the threshold of your door, have the courage to pass over him.' And yet this man, who spoke so harshly of the necessity of sacrifice, had himself experienced all its bitterness. 'I, who write these things,' he exclaims, 'have I a heart of stone? Do I not know what the agony is? Am I born of a rock? or have I sucked the breast of the tigress Hircania? Ah! full well do I understand these trials, for I have gone through them myself.' [1]

But the question for him was whether nature alone was to be listened to? if God had no rights over the soul He had created? and if the honour and happiness of sacrificing oneself for Divine love were not, under certain circumstances, the most sacred duty? This terrible problem will ever arise in a heart which feels the attraction to a higher life: an attraction which would be only deceitful and impossible of execution were nature never to yield her rights; and yet this strong impulse is put into our hearts by God Himself. It is therefore certain, according to St. Jerome, that when this Divine voice makes itself heard, and that only ties of blood stop the way, we must have the courage to make the sacrifice. At the same time, he adds, separation is not forgetfulness; for one carries with one into the desert or the cloister the most indelible recollection of those whom one has left behind, and in a higher point of view one may be still more useful to them by praying for them than if one had remained with them: which he still further enlarged upon in his letter to Heliodorus thus: 'Friend, beware of narrow views

[1] Non nobis est ferreum pectus, nec dura præcordia; non ex silice natos Hyrcanæ nutriêre tigrides. Et nos per ista transivimus. Facile rumpit hæc vincula amor Dei.—*Ad Heliodorum.*

and thoughts. The day will come when, conqueror of thyself and the world, thou wilt enter into the heavenly country, the celestial Jerusalem, thy forehead crowned with laurel. Then when thou hast become, with Paul, the citizen of heaven, thou wilt obtain for those thou hast loved and left on earth a right to the same heavenly citizenship.'[1]

All these thoughts had filled Paula's mind for a long while, and now the cession of her property having been effected, she began to speak openly of her intention of starting for the East and the Holy Places. This announcement exasperated her whole family. They felt that if once she went to the East she would remain there; and they dreaded lest Blesilla, and certainly Eustochium, should accompany her. Hymetius determined on a decisive measure, whereby he hoped to induce Eustochium to return to the world, which he felt would break up all Paula's Eastern plans. With this idea he organised a plot which he trusted would destroy the young girl's vocation, and desired his wife Prœtextata to carry it into execution.

On some pretext or other, which St. Jerome has not told us, Paula was persuaded to allow Eustochium to pay a visit to her aunt. Prœtextata overwhelmed her niece with tenderness and praises. Then, when evening came, all of a sudden Eustochium found herself surrounded by slaves, who carried off her veil and woollen robe, and proceeded to plait and arrange her hair according to the fashion of the day, to paint her face and eyebrows, and to dress her in a magnificent silk and jewelled costume.

[1] Veniet, veniet postea dies quo victor revertaris in patriam, quo Hierosolymam cœlestem vir fortis coronatus incedas. Tunc municipatum cum Paulo capies; tunc et parentibus tuis ejusdem civitatis jus petes; tunc et pro me rogabis qui te ut vinceres incitavi.—*Ad Heliodorum.*

After which her aunt presented her to all the brilliant society which had been invited for the occasion by Hymetius. Every one was in ecstasies with her grace and extreme beauty, and many openly pitied her for the enforced violence which they declared had been exercised by her mother to prevent her sharing in any of the natural pleasures and amusements of her age. Prœtextata and Hymetius felt confident that all these praises, and the luxury which surrounded her, would touch the imagination and heart of the child, and induce her to rebel against her mother's authority. But they were mistaken. Eustochium bore all with her usual sweetness and gentleness, but when night came she insisted on her old dress being given back to her, and on returning quietly to her mother's house.

The night after this cruel experiment St. Jerome relates that Prœtextata saw in her sleep an angel who menaced her in a terrible voice with the Divine anger. A very short time afterwards, in fact, Prœtextata met with every kind of misfortune: death invaded her home and carried off first her husband, then her children, and finally herself. It was impossible not to see in these calamities a direct punishment from God; and fifteen years later, when reminding Paula's daughter-in-law, Læta, the young wife of Toxotius, of these tragical events, St. Jerome writes: 'See how Christ punishes the profaners of His Temple, and how He defends His jewels, who are His virgins.'[1]

The attempt against Eustochium had been a failure. Both sisters continued bravely in the austere path they

[1] Ecce sibi eâdem nocte cernit in somnis venisse angelum terribili voce minitantem. . . . Omnia per ordinem expleta sunt, et seram miseræ pœnitentiam velox signavit interitus. Sic ulciscitur Christus violatores templi sui, sic gemmas et pretiosissima ornamenta defendit.—*Epist.* 57, *Ad Lætam.*

had chosen, and protested that nothing on earth should turn them from it. But Paula, who knew Rome and her family better than her children, did not share in their joyous security, and Jerome was still more anxious. Like the hen who has heard the cry of the bird of prey, and redoubles her vigilance for her little ones, he writes to Paula in the following terms: 'Salute my dear little novices, Blesilla and Eustochium and Felicita, who deserves her name, and all the choir of virgins in your holy household, for whom I tremble even when there seems nothing to fear. For in vain do they exclaim in their generous ardour, "*Ego civitas firma, civitas quæ non oppugnatur.*" No town should consider itself out of danger so long as the army of the enemy surrounds its walls. "No one," exclaims St. Cyprian, "can be sure of his salvation while danger lurks on all sides." Remember me before God,' St. Jerome adds in conclusion, 'and pray that the Lord Jesus Christ may defend us, and bruise Satan under our feet.'[1]

But the real danger for Eustochium and her sister did not consist in outward violence so much as in the relaxation of internal discipline in the Church at that time, and in the false maxims set forth by certain priests, widows, and virgins, who did not accept the consequences of their position, but had formed for themselves a soft and easy life, which was more Pagan than Christian. Jerome spared no pains in exposing these errors and

[1] Saluta Blesillam et Eustochium, tirunculas nostras. Saluta Felicitatem, vere carnis et spiritûs virginitate felicem. Saluta reliquum virginitatis chorum et domesticam tuam ecclesiam, cui omnia, etiam quæ tuta sunt, timeo. Quamvis etiam dicere audeant: *Ego civitas firma, civitas quæ non oppugnatur*, nullus, hostili obsedente exercitu, securus est. Nemo, ut ait beatus Cyprianus, satis tutus pericul oproximus. Memento mei, obsecrans ut Dominus noster Jesus Christus conterat Satanam sub pedibus nostris.—*Ad Paulam, Explanatio Psalmi* 118.

warning the chosen souls of whom he was the father and guide against their bad example. At last he was induced to write a letter to Eustochium on these subjects; a letter as famous in Christian antiquity as the one he wrote to the nephew of Heliodorus, Nepotian, on the priesthood, and to St. Paulinus of Nola on the religious state. This letter is so important a one that we will here give copious extracts from it. '"*Hearken, O daughter, and see and incline thy ear and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty.*" Thus in the 44th Psalm God speaks to the soul to invite it to leave, like Abraham, his own country, and to come into the land of the living of which the prophet speaks: "I hope to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." "*Look not back: neither stay thou in all the country about: but save thyself in the mountain.*" No, it is not well when once we have put our hands to the plough to look behind us, nor having once put on the robe of Christ to go down in search of another garment. Do you ask me, Eustochium, what will be the reward of such generous fidelity? Listen: The Eternal God "*shall greatly desire thy beauty.*" In these grand words is contained the great sacrament of virginity.'[1]

After having thus represented, by the help of Bible images, the excellence of this virtue, St. Jerome speaks of the courage necessary to defend it. 'O virgin! thou must have less pride than fear. Thou walkest laden with gold; beware of thieves.[2] Life is a continual battle-field; we shall be crowned elsewhere. Our enemies

[1] Hoc ergo illud magnum est sacramentum.—*Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.*

[2] Nolo tibi venire superbiam de proposito, sed timorem. Onusta incedis auro: latro tibi vitandus est.—*Ibid.*

surround us on all sides, and it is with our weak flesh, which will soon be dust, that we must brave the fight. Yes,' he goes on, 'we have this treasure in earthen vessels, and God Himself, who can do all things, cannot give us back this treasure if once lost. He may give pardon to repentance, but not innocence.'[1] 'Ah! this soul once consecrated to God, the virgin of whom it has been said, "*The queen stood on thy right hand in gilded clothing surrounded with variety*;" to sit down in the dust, and be covered with stains! Better would it have been to bow to the yoke of man, and follow the beaten tracks in the plain, than to have aspired to climb to the heights and then to fall miserably.[2] Thus our Lord Himself has said: "I am not come to bring peace, but the sword," the spiritual sword of holy warfare. All the saints have fought; one cannot be a saint at any other price.' And here Jerome reminds Eustochium of the struggles of St. Paul, that vessel of election, who, although specially chosen to preach the Gospel, was compelled to conquer his body, and bring it into subjection, and who, after so many fasts, and prisons, and flagellations, and sufferings, still felt the law of sin in his members, and exclaimed, 'Unhappy man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'[3] And then he told her of his own fights in the desert, his groans, and tears, and fasts,

[1] Cum omnia possit Deus, non valet suscitare virginem post ruinam. Valet quidem liberare de pœnâ, sed non coronare corruptam.—*Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.*

[2] Rectius fuerat hominis subiisse conjugium, ambulasse per plana, quam ad altiora tendentem in profundum cadere.—*Ibid.*

[3] Si Apostolus, vas electionis et separatus in Evangelium Christi, reprimit cor suum et servituti subjicit et tamen videt aliam legem in membris suis repugnantem legi mentis suæ; si exclamat; '*Infelix ego homo, quis me liberabit de corpore mortis hujus?*' tu te putas securam esse debere?—*Ibid.*

and vigils, and the flints with which he struck his breast, and then the ineffable joys of soul which followed and consoled him after these terrible struggles. We have already alluded to this.

There is, therefore, no possibility of any illusion. The difficulty of the virtue is equal to its beauty. 'It is easy to guard oneself against all the rest, but in this case we carry the enemy about within ourselves. He follows us everywhere.'[1] If then holy innocence be so beautiful a virtue, and if one aspires to that glory, and to live an angel's life in mortal flesh,[2] then one must make up one's mind to a continual warfare, and to immediate and generous resistance. 'Should evil thoughts arise in our hearts, we must not indulge in them, but, like the serpents of Babylon, crush them under a stone, and that stone is Christ.'

Then he leads her on from these considerations to the different steps by which the virgin must successively ascend to the mountain of perfection, namely, mortification, abstinence, and the most rigorous precautions against the invasions of a worldly spirit.

On the subject of mortification St. Jerome is explicit and decisive. 'If you say to me,' he writes, '"Born of a noble race, brought up in every luxury and softness, I cannot give up choice wines and delicate food, nor lead an austere, penitential life," I have only one word to say in reply: "Live as you like, but only you must then renounce, and will cease to deserve, any special favours from God."'[3] Then, going to the root of the matter,

[1] Facile caremus aliis vitiis; hic hostis nobis inclusus est. Quocumque pergimus, nobiscum portamus inimicum.—*Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.*

[2] In corpore humano affectare vitam angelorum.—*Ibid.*

[3] Quod si volueris respondere te nobili stirpe generatam, semper in deliciis, semper in plumis, non posse a vino et esculentioribus cibis

and destroying by a few simple, straightforward words the superficial objections of the world, he continues, 'It is not a question of denying that God created all things for our use and enjoyment, nor to pretend that He takes pleasure in our suffering, or in our having empty stomachs. No! but that virtue is not proof against self-indulgence, nor secure without severity towards ourselves.' [1]

To this courageous spirit of mortification St. Jerome wishes that a young girl should add other necessary precautions: that she should remain hidden and modestly dressed, that she should stay at home under the sheltering roof of her parents, and spend her time in recollection and prayer, in working with her hands, and studying good and holy books, avoiding, as far as possible, public amusements and dangerous society; or that, if she be obliged, from her position, to go out into the world, she should take 'the veil of modesty,' as befits a Christian virgin.

'O my Eustochium! O my child! O my sister!—since my age and the affection I bear towards you permit me to give you these two appellations—if by birth you are the first of Roman virgins, make all the more efforts to complete your work, and do not by a half sacrifice run the risk of losing both present joys and future glory. I conjure you to guard your treasure with jealous care. Imitate your Spouse, Jesus Christ; remain quietly with your mother, and be obedient and submissive towards her. Go out as little as possible. Honour the martyrs in your own chamber. You will never lack excuse to go from home if you do so whenever the occasion presents itself.[2] . . . I

abstinere, nec his legibus vivere, districtius respondebo: 'Vive ergo lege tuâ, quæ Dei non potes.'—*Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.*

[1] Non quod Deus, universitatis Creator et Dominus, intestinorum nostrorum rugitu et inanitate ventris delectetur; sed quod aliter pudicitia tuta esse non possit.—*Ibid.*

[2] Itaque, mi Eustochium, filia, germana, aliud enim ætatis, aliud

implore you before God, before Christ, and before His holy angels, do not expose a consecrated vessel to the eyes of the profane. Oza, not having feared to put his hand on the Ark which no one was to touch, was struck dead on the spot. Yet there is no vessel of gold or silver so precious in the sight of God as a virginal body. The spouse of Christ is that Ark, all gilt within and without, wherein dwelleth the law of God; and as in the Jewish Ark there was nothing but the Tables of the Law, so no strange thought, alien from God, must enter into the heart of a virgin.[1] . . . Love the solitude and silence of your own room, where you are not alone, for you have with you the Spouse of your soul. When you pray you speak to Him. When you read, it is His voice which speaks to you. Read diligently and learn all you can. Let sleep surprise you with a holy book in your hand, and if your head drops with fatigue let it be on a page of Holy Writ. See in the Gospel how the repose of Mary at the feet of the Saviour was preferred to the eagerness of Martha. Eustochium, be Mary; prefer the food of the soul to that of the body. Let your sisters run abroad and seek how they shall receive Christ in their houses, while you remain at His feet and say, "*I*

charitatis est nomen, quæ quanto prima Romanæ urbis virgo nobilis esse cœpisti, tanto tibi amplius laborandum est, ne et præsentibus bonis careas et futuris. Omni custodiâ conserva cor tuum. Esto subjecta parentibus; imitare Christum sponsum. Rarus sit egressus in publicum. Martyres tibi quærantur in cubiculo tuo. Numquam causa deerit procedendi, si semper quando necesse est processura sis.—*Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.*

[1] Obtestor te coram Deo, et Christo Jesu, et angelis ejus, ne vasa templi Domini, quæ solis sacerdotibus videre concessum est, facile in publicum proferas, ne sacrarium Dei quisquam profanus aspiciat. . Neque enim vas aureum tam carum Deo fuit quam templum corporis virginalis. . . . Sponsa Christi arca est testamenti, intrinsecus et extrinsecus deaurata, custos legis Domini, &c. &c.—*Ibid.*

have found Him whom my soul loveth: I held Him, and will not let Him go."'[1] As to prayer, St. Jerome adds: 'Although the apostle advises us to "pray always," and that the saint's sleep itself is a prayer, it is still wise to fix certain hours for divine worship, so that if some work should detain us at the proper time, the striking of the clock should remind us of the duty. Who does not know the hours of Tierce, Sext, None, Matins, and Vespers? One should never take any food without saying grace, nor leave the table without thanking "the Creator of all things."'[2] He did not hesitate to add to this courageous child, 'It would be well for you to rise once or twice in the night to look over the passages of Holy Scripture which you have learnt by heart during the day.[3] . . . Before you go out of the house arm yourself with prayer; when you come in, before sitting down, pray; do not allow your body to rest till you have thus fed your soul. And before each action, each undertaking, make the sign of the cross.'[4]

[1] Semper te cubiculi tui secreta custodiant. Oras, loqueris ad sponsum; legis, ille tibi loquitur. Crebrius lege, disce quam plurima. Tenenti codicem somnus obrepat, et cadentem faciem pagina sancta suscipiat. Esto tu Maria, cibis præferto doctrinam. Sorores tuæ cursitent, et quærant quomodo Christum hospitem suscipiant: tu semel sæculi onere projecto, sede ad pedes Domini, et dic: '*Inveni eum quem quærebat anima mea; tenebo eum et non dimittam.*'—*Epist.* 8, *Ad Eustochium.*

[2] Quamquam Apostolus orare nos semper jubeat, et sanctis etiam ipse sit somnus oratio, tamen divisas orandi horas debemus habere. Horam Tertiam, Sextam, Nonam, Diluculum quoque et Vesperam nemo est qui nesciat. Nec cibi sumantur nisi oratione præmissâ; nec recedatur a mensâ, nisi referatur Creatori gratia.—*Epist.* 8, *Ad Eustochium.*

[3] Noctibus bis terque surgendum: revolvenda quæ de scripturis memoriter retinemus.—*Ibid.*

[4] Egredientes de hospitio armet oratio; regredientibus de plateâ, oratio occurrat antequam sessio; nec prius corpusculum requiescat quam anima pascatur; ad omnem actum, ad omnem incessum, manus pingat crucem Domini.—*Ibid.*

Jerome went on to forbid music and profane poetry to Eustochium as being occupations too frivolous for the spouse of Christ. 'Do not spend your time in songs and light poetry. What has Horace to do with the Psalms, Virgil with the Gospels, Cicero with the Apostle? For although to the pure all things are pure, and that nothing should be rejected which may be received with thankfulness, we must not drink at the same moment of the cup of Christ and the cup of devils.'

St. Jerome was still under the impression of that celebrated dream he had had in the desert, and which he here related to Eustochium, when he was cited before the tribunal of the supreme Judge by the accusing angel, as 'a Ciceronian, and not a Christian.' If any one should imagine that he thereby condemned all study of profane authors to young Christians, let it not be forgotten that St. Jerome is speaking to a chosen soul, whose whole life should be in harmony. And at Bethlehem, later on, we shall see that St. Jerome came back to his favourite authors, and made use of them even in his instructions to young children; a condescension for which Ruffinus reproaches him bitterly, although the Church has not confirmed the criticism.

The fruit of such a life of austerity, recollection, and prayer is good works, to which St. Jerome thus eloquently exhorts Eustochium: 'Gold, silver, and riches of all sorts are strangers to us, but our good works are our own, and are the real treasures of our souls.'[1] And he adds, as a warning to those who prefer luxury to charity, these terrible words, worthy of the meditation of all Christian women: 'The greater part of our fine ladies have overflowing wardrobes, and a fresh costume for

[1] Aliena nobis auri argentique sunt pondera; nostra possessio spiritalis est.—*Epist.* 8, *Ad Eustochium.*

every day; for them even parchment is ornamented with purple, gold adorns their letters, their books are heavy with precious stones; while Christ, cold, naked, dies of hunger at their doors.'[1] But good works are but a part of Christian charity. Jerome asks her for zeal besides, a real apostolate of souls; he wishes her to have that holy, chaste, and loving influence which should win others, and which is the sign and reward of a pure heart. 'You have as companions in your holy profession, plebeians, slaves, young servants; do not set yourself above them, for they have the same Spouse, they chaunt the same sacred Psalms, they receive with you the same body of Christ; strive rather to win more souls. Let the consideration you show to your young companions be an inducement to others to follow their example. Those who hesitate, who are weak in faith, you must encourage, strengthen, and help onwards; their perseverance will be your work and your merit.'[2]

The only sure guardian of all these virtues is holy humility; of which St. Jerome speaks as follows: 'There is another peril against which you must guard yourself carefully, and it is that of vainglory. Do not appear more pious and more humble than is necessary.[3] Many seem to avoid showing off their poverty, or their charity,

[1] Plerasque videas armaria stipare vestibus, tunicas mutare quotidie. Inficiuntur membranæ colore purpureo, aurum liquescit in litteras, gemmis codices vestiuntur, et nudus ante earum fores Christus emoritur! —*Epist.* 8, *Ad Eustochium.*

[2] Si quæ ancillulæ sint comites propositi tui, ne erigaris adversus eas, ne infleris ut domina. Unum sponsum habere cœpitis, simul psallitis, Christi corpus simul accipitis. Provocentur et aliæ. Honor virginum sit invitatio cæterarum. Quod si aliquam senseris infirmiorem in fide, suscipe, consolare, blandire, et pudicitiam illius fac lucrum tuum.—*Ibid.*

[3] Nec satis religiosa velis videri, nec plus humilis quam necesse est, ne gloriam fugiendo quæras.—*Ibid.*

or their fasts, only to seek a more subtle kind of esteem; and by a strange return of vanity seek for praise while they seem to fly from it. I have found some people exempt from those violent feelings which disturb the human heart, like joy, sorrow, hope, and fear, but I know very few who are altogether free from this miserable self-complacency. Assuredly your mother and yourself have trodden vulgar pride under foot. But you must take care lest pride should insinuate itself in the very contempt of pride; lest a secret thought should come over you of seeking to please those whose good opinion you covet by the poverty of your dress, as formerly you sought for approbation by your magnificent attire. Beware also of thinking yourself better than others. If you fast for two or three days, do not go and fancy you are so much more pious than one who does not fast at all. One may fast, and fly into a passion; another may not even abstain, and yet have far more sweetness and gentleness. One may pay less attention to restrictions in food, but will take it with more thankfulness to God. What is a fast worth which mortifies the body but not the soul? "*Is this the fast that I have chosen?*" saith the Lord by His Prophet. What is the meaning of a fast which does not prevent a person from indulging in anger or bad temper for days and even for months together? As for you, Eustochium, do not look out for the faults of others, but for those in your own heart, and let truth and simplicity pervade all your actions.'[1] 'This life which I have drawn out for you,' he continues, 'will appear hard to one who does not love Jesus Christ; but he who loves our Lord, and who to gain Christ, according to the words of the Apostle, shall

[1] Te ipsam considerans, noli in alterius ruinâ, sed in tuo opere gloriari.—*Epist.* 8, *Ad Eustochium.*

esteem all worldly pomp as nothing, such a one will have no trouble in accepting all things and exclaiming with St. Paul: "*Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ?*" No, nothing costs too much when one loves, nothing is difficult when we feel our hearts burning with ardent affection. Look at Jacob and how much he suffered for Rachel! "*Jacob*" (it is said in Holy Scripture) "*served seven years for Rachel: and they seemed but a few days because of the greatness of his love.*" The human heart cannot live without love; if we take away from it earthly affections, we must replace them with a Divine love.[1] Do not let us deceive ourselves in this matter; it is only a supreme love at the bottom of her heart which constitutes a Christian virgin. She loves Jesus Christ, and that is enough. But when one loves here below, one's eyes meet, looks and smiles answer each other. Where, then, has a Christian virgin met Jesus Christ? That is the mystery of this supernatural love; but it is evident that in some way or other this Divine beauty must have appeared to her, for she is ready to give up everything for Him. We, too, love Jesus Christ, and all that is hard seems to us easy, and all that is long, short; so that wounded by love we may exclaim: Oh, how long our exile seems on this earth! The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'[2] 'Leave for a moment,' he continues, 'this prison-house of your body, and represent to yourself the future reward, which will be the recompense of your present sacrifices;

[1] Difficile est animam humanam aliquid non amare. Carnis amor spiritûs amore superatur. Desiderium desiderio restinguitur.—*Epist.* 8, *Ad Eustochium.*

[2] Amemus et nos Christum, ejusque semper quæramus amplexus, et facile videbitur omne difficile.—*Ibid.*

a reward such as "the eye of man hath not seen, nor his ear heard, nor hath it entered into his heart to conceive." What a day, O my Eustochium! will that be when the Virgin Mary, the mother of our Saviour, will come and meet you with choirs of angels; when your Spouse Himself will receive you with these words: "*Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come; for winter is now past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers have appeared in our land!*" Then all the choir of holy women of the old dispensation will come and embrace you: Sarah with the wives; Anna, daughter of Phanuel, with the widows; and all the rest. Again, there will come, in divers choirs, your two mothers, according to nature and grace—Paula, who will rejoice in having given you birth; Marcella, at having been your holy instructress in the way of virginity. Then will you hear around you that canticle which is given only to virgins to sing: "*These are they who were not defiled—for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.*"'[1]

These are St. Jerome's last words, as if to arm her for the fight: 'Whenever vain desires for the things of this century shall arise in your heart, or that the world shall appear before you in glowing colours; or if nature should, from time to time, feel some regret for the sacrifices you are making, lift up your thoughts to

[1] Qualis erit illa dies cum tibi Maria, mater Domini, choris occurret comitata virgineis! Tuus et ipse Sponsus occurret et dicet: '*Surge, veni, proxima mea, columba mea.*' . . . Hinc et alius castitatis chorus occurret, Sara cum nuptis, Anna, filia Phanuelis, cum viduis. Erunt in diversis gregibus carnis et spiritûs matres tuæ. Lætabitur illa quòd genuit, exultabitur ista quòd docuit. Tunc centum quadraginta quatuor millia cantabunt canticum novum: '*Hi sunt qui cum mulieribus se non coinquinaverunt, virgines enim sunt. Hi sequentur Agnum quocumque ierit.*'—*Epist.* 8, *Ad Eustochium.*

heaven, and you will hear your immortal Spouse whisper to your soul: "*Put Me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thy arm*;" and, strengthened by these divine words, you will, in your turn, reply: "*Many waters cannot quench charity, neither can the floods drown it.*"'

CHAPTER VII.

CONTINUATION OF THE LETTER OF ST. JEROME TO EUSTOCHIUM —THANKS OF PAULA'S DAUGHTER—FRESH EFFORTS ON THE PART OF ST JEROME TO CONFIRM PAULA AND HER DAUGHTERS IN THESE HOLY DISPOSITIONS.

(384.)

We have not given the whole of Jerome's letter in the above extracts. It was necessary likewise to defend the perfect life which these young virgins were striving to lead against the formidable opposition of their families, and the scandals which crept into the Church in the very midst of examples of such virtue as astonished the whole Roman world. Jerome took this opportunity to scourge these unjust censors and expose these abuses; and hence a whole gallery of life-pictures, written with a vigour and a severity which are almost startling, but very curious and instructive, if we do not go beyond St. Jerome's own meaning, and judge the whole Church of the fourth century by these melancholy examples. Jerome then writes to Eustochium:—

'Do not frequent worldly houses, or court a society which you have despised to consecrate yourself to God. Women pride themselves on having husbands of a certain rank. The empress's court is consequently thronged with people. But you, spouse of Christ, why do you want to show yourself to the spouse of a man? It is allowable to have a holy pride in this matter. As a

Christian virgin, know that you are above all these women. But I do not warn you only against those who exhibit all the luxury of a worldly home, whom a troop of slaves surround, and whose rich robes are woven with gold ; but avoid also those widows who are so from necessity, not because they wished for their husbands' death, but because they neglected the occasion of embracing holy continence. Their clothes may be changed, but not their vanity or their luxury. Troops of slaves precede their gorgeous litters ; and to see their painted faces one would not imagine they had lost their husbands, but were seeking for fresh ones. Their houses are full of feasting and frivolity, and among their guests are found, O, shame! even priests, who come to be lightly spoken of amidst these sad scenes of dissipation, which only add to their pride. Fly also, as from a plague, from those virgins and widows who wander, idle and curious, from house to house, preaching self-indulgence and continually thinking of their bodies while they repeat : " My dear little friend, spend your money as you like, and enjoy life while you have health and strength. Save yourself for your children by-and-by." Thus they weaken and shake the strongest minds. Then they say: " *To the pure all things are pure.*" " My conscience is enough for me. A pure heart is all that God asks of us. Why abstain from pleasant things and good food which God has created for our use? " And with all these fine reasons, they lead easy, joyous lives. And if they see a virgin looking pale and mortified, they exclaim : " Poor girl ! Would-be nun ! Manichean ! " Such are the words they throw in her teeth. And they are right. With their principles, fasting would indeed be a heresy. But as for these girls, you may see them any day in public places, striving to attract attention, and, by their glances, drawing on young

men to follow their steps; they wear delicate dresses, with purple threads; their hair loosely tied, so as to fall with greater grace; elegant shoes; a veil floating on their shoulders; short, tight sleeves; an indolent way of walking—such is their virginity, and all the world speaks in their praise. "Look at that true servant of Christ," they exclaim, "with her simple, amiable piety: not like that other girl, with her austere, rigid, extraordinary ways." Well, let them have their panegyrists, and let them praise up their pretended virtue; as for us, we can be quite content without them.'

False monks were not more spared: 'Fly, Eustochium, as from a pest, from those men whom you see wearing, from affectation, a great heavy iron chain, as a sign of their pretended service towards God; long hair like women (in spite of the apostle's prohibition); a worn-out old black cloak, and bare feet in all seasons. They wear Satan's livery, and it is thus accoutred that Antimus and Sophronius scandalised all Rome. These false monks are morose and sad in appearance. But though their fasts may be rigorous, they know how to make amends to themselves for it.' [This was the portrait of Jovinian, the future apostate, and, consequently, the bitter enemy of monastic life.] 'I ought to add, though I say it with shame, that there are, again, priests and deacons whose great anxiety is to have perfumed clothes, well-fitting shoes, hair curled with curling irons, and fingers glittering with rings. They walk delicately on their toes for fear of dirtying their stockings, and to look at them one might fancy they were young bridegrooms rather than priests.[1] These men know the houses, the characters, and the habits of all the fine ladies in Rome:

[1] Tales cum videris, sponsos magis estimato quàm clericos.—*Epist.* 81, *Ad Eustochium.*

and I will give you a sketch of one of these men, and of the way in which he spends his day, that you may be able to judge of the rest.'

Then follows the portrait of this personage, worthy of Juvenal or La Bruyère.

These sketches, of which we have only quoted one or two, will give us a pretty fair notion of the mischievous influences of the Pagan luxury with which the Church was at that moment surrounded. Nothing was more needful than to point out these corruptions, and distinguish between the true Christian spirit of monasticism and the spurious imitation presented by the Helvidiuses and Jovinians of that age, as of all other ages in the Church. But this letter, as might be expected, caused an immense sensation in Rome; and while on the one hand it rejoiced Paula and her holy company, it roused the most furious indignation in those whose hypocrisy it had unmasked; which, though kept in restraint for a moment by the protection which Pope Damasus extended to Jerome, soon broke forth into open violence. There was a universal coalition against him. They declared that he had dishonoured the Church in the eyes of the Pagans by these revelations; as if a weak toleration of scandals which Pagans could not ignore did not dishonour it a thousand times more! They travestied his words so as to give them an odious meaning, and twisted his bold metaphors into assertions of false doctrine.[1] To the fury of the hypocrites was added the pride of ignorance. His correction of the New Testament and of the Psalms, undertaken at the request of Paula and Marcella, and published by order of Pope Damasus, had just appeared, and became a fresh weapon in the hands

[1] Lapidato Virginitatis libello quem sanctæ Eustochio Romæ scripseram.—*Epist.* 52, *Ad Nepotianum.*

of his adversaries. All these clerical gentlemen, the possessors of those gilt and illustrated Bibles which Jerome had condemned, declared he had made alterations in the Word of God, and outraged the tradition of the Church.[1] Thus, while the patricians treated him as a rogue and a seducer, disturbing the peace of families, all the Pharisees and the ignorant factions in the Church cried out against him. It was, as he said, in his biblical language, like the boiling over of the mysterious caldron seen by Jeremiah, the symbol of the persecution of the world against the saints.[2]

But Jerome was not very likely to yield to such attacks. 'How!' he exclaimed, 'am I not to be permitted to say what men are not ashamed to do? But what have I then said which is so dreadful? That I think virgins had better spend their time with women than with men! And because I have ventured to say this I am pointed at by every one in Rome, and my enemies are multiplied like the hairs on my head!'[3] 'My censure,' he says, in another letter, 'has offended a host of people. But what have you to complain of—you who feel yourselves innocent!'[4] There was one person in particular who distinguished himself by his

[1] Ad me perlatum est quosdam homunculos mihi studiose detrahere, cur adversus auctoritatem veterum, et totius mundi opinionem, aliqua in Evangeliis emendare tentaverim.—*Epist.* 25, *Ad Marcellam.*

[2] Conclamavit Pharisæorum senatus; adversum me imperitorum factio conjuravit. Olla illa, quæ in Jeremiâ post baculum cernitur a facie aquilonis, ardere cœpit.—*Præf. in Didymum.*

[3] Scio te, cum ista legeris, rugare frontem, et meum, si fieri potest, os digito velle comprimere, ne audeam dicere quæ alii facere non erubescunt. Rogo, quid a nobis libere dictum est? Numquid? . . . Unum, miser locutus, quod virgines sæpius deberent cum mulieribus esse quam cum masculis, totius urbis oculos offendi, cunctorum digitis notor.—*Epist.* 25, *Ad Marcellam.*

[4] *Epist.* 26, *Ad Marcellam.*

animosity against Jerome, and who was foolish enough to take all his satires as directed against himself. This was a certain Onasus, a native of Segeste, who was a lawyer in Rome. 'What!' exclaimed Jerome, 'I cannot attack any folly or any vice without Onasus of Segeste imagining I meant him! Is he, then, the only man in Rome who swells out his cheeks with vapid words? I laugh at a lawyer needing a pleader; to you, who are eloquent, what does it matter? I speak of a priest who has accumulated riches; if you are poor, why are you angry? I laugh at the owls, the grubs, the Nile monsters; and it is Onasus I have been turning into ridicule!'[1]

Nevertheless this great champion of the truth, this austere master of the Christian life, knew how to mingle tenderness with gentleness towards those who were his disciples. This trait in his character appears in another of his letters to Eustochium, which shows us also the charming and amiable relations existing between him and Paula's family. Full of admiration for her master, and grateful as she was for his letter, Eustochium yet felt that he had been a little austere in his counsels and somewhat sharp in his reproaches; and she made him understand this in a playful and delicate fashion which amused him very much. The feast of St. Peter was at hand—a feast which was then celebrated at Rome, as it is to-day, with great pomp in the Basilica and great joy in the homes of all Christians.[2] Although St. Jerome was generally inflexible in the matter of presents, Eustochium thought that, for once, he would relax the severity of his rule, and therefore took courage to send him a basket containing

[1] *Epist.* 26, *Ad Marcellam.*

[2] Festus est dies, et natalis beati Petri festivius est solito condiendus. —*Epist.* 23, *Ad Eustochium.*

some cherries, some of the bracelets which were called *armillæ*, and a few doves; together with a half-joking note, in which she explained the meaning of these gifts: the cherries signifying virginal purity;[1] the bracelets being such as were given to Roman legionaries after some brilliant exploits;[2] and the doves, to imply that sweetness should soften the bitterness of strife. St. Jerome accepted her presents and thanked her in a letter full of fun and kindliness, though mingling one or two grave lessons with his gaiety. 'I have received,' he writes, 'your little gifts, "little" only in appearance, for they are to me of great price. We are keeping high holiday, and may be allowed a little extra indulgence without departing too much from our usual habits. That is what you have done, mingling skilfully sweetness with sharpness in the offering. I am going to do like you. Honey was never offered to God in sacrifice, and the Paschal Feast was eaten with bitter herbs. You have, then, sent me a letter, some bracelets, and some doves: all these are to be found in Holy Scriptures. Jerusalem, in Ezekiel, is adorned with bracelets, and the Prophet Baruch received a letter from Jeremiah. It is said also that the Holy Spirit descended from heaven in the shape of a dove. Well, I will answer—by mingling some sharpness, too, with my words—that the true bracelets we should wear on our arms are good works, and that we must beware of imitating the impious prince who cut in pieces Baruch's letter with his penknife; that is, we must not tear that which God has written in our

[1] Canistrum cerasis refertum virginali verecundiâ rubentibus.—*Epist.* 23, *Ad Eustochium.*

[2] These *armillæ*, which formerly were only a military ornament, became in the end rewards of valour, and were only given to those in the Roman Legions.—Dezobry, *Rome in the Time of Augustus*, tome iv. p. 258.

hearts. Lastly, we must not deserve the reproach of Osee to Ephraim: "*She is become as a dove not having a heart.*" Ah! you will exclaim, this is very severe on a feast day! But you yourself have provoked it! However, lest you should think I did not value your presents, I will tell you that your cherries were so fresh, so pure and beautiful in colour, that I could have believed they had been brought by Lucullus; for it was he, you know, who, having conquered Pontius and Armenia, brought this kind of fruit from Cerasonta to Rome, which we have in consequence called cherries (*cerasus*). Holy Scriptures speak of a basket of figs; but they do not, I think, mention cherries. Allow me, then, to apply to them what is said of figs. I trust, my Eustochium, that you will be like those figs which were offered in the Temple of God, and which were said to be "*good, very good*;" for you know our Lord does not love mediocrity, and that He vomits the lukewarm out of His mouth.'[1]

Can anything be more charming than these letters between the rigid monk and Paula's pious gentle child? It is thus that saints know how to mingle amiability with their teaching, and so give virtue a greater charm.

This great fight of Jerome's, far from interrupting his biblical studies, plunged him in them still more deeply. As for Paula, whose mission was not controversy but practice, meditation on Holy Scripture gave her all those lights and consolations which her soul needed. She delighted especially in the Psalms, which filled her with joy and sweetness. A passage in one of Jerome's writings shows us with what minute care she and her children devoted themselves to this study.

One day when she was reading Psalm cxviii. Paula remarked that this Psalm was alphabetical, each verse

[1] *Epist.* 19, *Ad Eustochium.*

commencing with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and these letters being disposed in groups. 'Why is this?' she exclaimed to Jerome; who in reply gave her the explanation; but Paula, mistrusting her own memory, begged him to write down what he had said. Hence a curious and charming explanation of this beautiful Psalm. First, St. Jerome makes her see that each letter of the Hebrew alphabet has a particular meaning; and that therefore, if these letters at the beginning of each verse were put in groups, these groups must make sentences; and this is the meaning of the phrase formed out of the first group: *Aleph* means doctrine; *Beth*, house; *Ghimel*, fulness; *Daleth*, tables; so that the sentence may thus be translated: 'The doctrine of the House of God—that is, the Church—contains all the fulness of the tables of the law;' in other words, that in the Church's doctrine is contained the life and light of the soul. He ended his short explanation by these words: 'I only ask you, can there be a purer or a greater pleasure than this kind of meditation on the words of Holy Scripture? To know the wisdom of God, to enter as far as we may into His secrets, to contemplate in His revealed Word the eternal thoughts of the divinity: is there anything to be compared to it? This divine wisdom, the wise men, or rather the fools of this world, laugh at. Let them alone. Let them heap up their gold, drink in jewelled cups, shine in silk dresses, revel in popular demonstrations, and give themselves every possible enjoyment without exhausting their riches. But as for us, let our treasure consist in meditating night and day on the Word of God, and in trampling under foot, without fear or false shame after the example of our Master, the conventional follies of the age in which we live.'[1]

[1] Oro te, quid hoc sacratius sacramento? Quid hâc voluptate

Whilst one morning Jerome was explaining to Marcella and the rest Psalm lxxii., and had just come to the words, '*If I speak thus, behold I should condemn the generation of thy children*,' a message was brought to them that their venerable friend Lea had died suddenly, and that the holy widow, as humble in death as in life, had avoided all ordinary funeral obsequies, by giving directions that her body should be at once conveyed to Ostia, the place of sepulture of her family, whither it was already on its way. Paula and Marcella turned pale at the news, and burst into tears: not that they doubted Lea's happiness in heaven, but because none can see without sadness the breaking of this vessel of clay, and also because they had not been able to perform the last duties towards their dear old friend.

At the same moment that this illustrious matron, who had held so high a rank in Rome, passed away thus silently from the palace which she had transformed into a convent, a man who had known Lea intimately in the world, and who had ridiculed with due Pagan bitterness her change of life, the famous Prætextatus, died also, but in a very different way. This man, invested with the highest dignities, who had had the honour of a public triumph, and whom the Roman people had saluted with acclamations at the Capitol, had just been appointed consul for the ensuing year 385. But he had not the time to enjoy the pompous feast which awaited him at

jucundius? Qui cibi, quæ mella sunt dulciora quàm Dei scire prudentiam, et in abdita ejus intrare, et sensum creatoris inspicere, et sermones Dei tui, qui a sapientibus hujus mundi deridentur, plenos sapientiâ ducere? Habeant sibi cæteri, si velint, suas opes, gemmâ bibant, serico niteant, plausu populi delectentur et per varias voluptates divitias suas vincere nequeant. Nostræ divitiæ sint in lege Domini meditari die ac nocte, et sæculi fluctus, Domino præeunte, calcare.—*Ad Paulam, Explanatio Psalmi* 118.

the Senate and Forum on the day of the January Calends, to celebrate his accession to office. Death suddenly laid low the new consul, the mighty pontiff of the gods, the ancient pro-consul of Achaia, and former prefect of Rome, &c. At the news of this calamity all the city was moved; the people, as a token of mourning, abstained from the theatre. Symmachus, prefect of Rome that year, when announcing the death of his friend to the emperors Theodosius and Arcadius, offered to resign his charge, as a mark of his grief. The most pompous funeral was appointed for the intended consul, a fulsome epitaph was engraved on his tomb, and a statue was set up to him in Trajan's Forum.[1]

This event had a particular interest for Paula, whose relations with Prætextatus had been so intimate, and whose sister was the sister-in-law of Paula, and the aunt of her children. Paula hastened accordingly to see his unhappy widow, who, being, like her late husband, a fervent Pagan, initiated in all the mysteries, and a priestess of Ceres, affected more exultation than sorrow before her Christian comforters, and declared that her husband was already rejoicing in the milky way.

Jerome seized the opportunity to write an eloquent letter to Marcella, in which he drew out the grave lessons contained in the striking contrast shown by these two

[1] The following is the epitaph:—

Vettio . Agorio . Prætextato . V . C . et . Corre
Ctori . Tvsclæ . et . Vmbriæ . Consvlari . Lvsita
NIæ . Proconsvli Achaiæ . Præfect . Vrbi . Præfe
Cto . Prætori . Illyrici . Italiæ . et . Africæ . cons .
Designato . Legato . Amplissimi Ordinis . Septies .
Et . ad . impetrandvm . Rebvs . Ardvis . Semper . op
posito . Parenti . Publicæ . privati . more . reven
do . vt . etiam . Statvæ . Ipsivs . Domvs . Honora
re . insignia . constitvi . locariqve . cvravit .

sudden deaths. After having described the admirable but hidden life of the holy widow, he exclaimed: 'And now, after a short labour, she enjoys eternal beatitude; she is admitted into the celestial choirs, and is reposing in the bosom of Abraham; while, like another Lazarus, she sees the rich consul, no longer clothed in purple, but in mourning, imploring her but for one drop of the water with which she is quenching her thirst. What a change! He who only a few days ago saw himself at the height of his ambition; who went in triumph to the Capitol, amidst the frantic enthusiasm of the people, and at whose death the whole town is moved, is now stripped of all, and desolate—not in the starry palaces of heaven, as his poor widow vainly asserts, but in eternal darkness. She, on the contrary, who remained hidden in her little room, who lived a life of obscurity unknown to the world, whose existence seemed a folly, and her death without honour, is now in the train of Jesus Christ, and repeating those words of immortal hope, "*Quæcumque audivimus, ita et vidimus in civitate Dei nostri.*"'[1] Thus did Jerome confirm the souls he was training in that path of sacrifice and immolation in which Paula, Blesilla, and Eustochium were marching with giant strides. The generous love of

[1] Nunc igitur pro brevi labore æternâ beatitudine fruitur, excipitur angelorum choris, Abrahæ sinibus confovetur, et cum paupere quondam Lazaro divitem purpuratum et non palmatum consulem, sed atratum, stillam digiti minoris cernit inquirere. O! quanta rerum mutatio! Ille quem ante paucos dies dignitatum omnium culmina præcedebant, qui Capitolinas ascendit arces, quem plausu quondam et tripudio romanus populus excepit, ad cujus interitum urbs universa commota est, nunc desolatus et nudus, non in lacteo cæli palatio, ut uxor mentitur infelix, sed in sordentibus tenebris continetur. Hæc vero quam unius cubiculi secreta vallabant, quæ pauper videbatur et tenuis, cujus vita putabatur amentia, Christum sequitur et dicit: '*Quæcumque audivimus, ita et vidimus in civitate Dei nostri.*'—*Epist.* 20, *Ad Marcellam.*

God consumed them all three equally; the study of the Holy Scriptures was their greatest delight, and Jerome could scarcely suffice for the work expected of him by the eager Blesilla. It was she also who was the most anxious for that great journey to the East which her mother and sister had so ardently desired for so long a time—a wish which some words in a letter to Eustochium, wherein Jerome had depicted with his usual charm the life of the fathers in the desert, had still further inflamed. The group of virgin in Paula's and Marcella's houses—some patricians, others old servants—whom Paula, to use St. Jerome's expression, had made 'her sisters,'[1] declared that they would follow Paula and her children wherever they went.

And what a charm and what an advantage to be guided in such a journey by St. Jerome himself, an old pilgrim in the Holy Land, and to hear him explain all these sacred texts on the very sites where they had been written! 'When shall we start?' was the constant exclamation of Blesilla. The time, in truth, seemed to be at hand for the execution of this long-contemplated journey. But God had other views for Blesilla; and a thunder-clap which burst unexpectedly in the midst of all the plans of the pious pilgrims struck Paula in her most sensitive point, and re-opened all the wounds of her heart.

[1] De ancillis in sorores mutaverat.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

CHAPTER VIII.

DEATH OF BLESILLA.

(384.)

SINCE her last illness, the health of Blesilla seemed more firmly established than ever, and she walked onward with ardour in the same path as her mother and sister, to the intense joy of both. But, alas! tears were to follow quickly on this joy.

A short time after the death of Prætextatus, towards the month of November in the year 384, she had a relapse of that fever which is so dreaded at the fall of the leaf, and in a few days her life was despaired of.

The news of the danger in which she lay filled not only Paula's palace, but all the patrician society, with consternation, for Blesilla was universally beloved. The people, who had likewise begun to know her, were equally moved. But the fever ran its height with extraordinary rapidity, and very soon there was no hope left. God had accepted the good will of the young widow, who by her generosity had made up for the short interval allowed her for repentance. Four months had hardly elapsed since her conversion when God judged her ripe for an eternal crown, and gathered this fair flower for heaven.[1]

[1] In some martyrolcgies Blesilla is honoured as a saint on January 22.—Baronius, tome iv., ad Annum 384.

Her death was of the kind of which the saints only give the example, and which console while they grieve us. She was only twenty, and she was about to die! Her mother and sisters, her friends, Marcella, St. Jerome, all remained weeping round her bed. Blesilla alone was calm. Although gasping for breath and devoured by the fever, a beautiful expression lit up her pale face; a beauty not of this earth, like the last ray of a soul about to escape from its prison-house, transfigured her. Only for a moment a shadow passed over her forehead and tears came into her eyes; not at the thought of death, but at not having had time to atone, as she had hoped to do, for her previous frivolities. She exclaimed to those around her: 'Oh! pray to our Lord Jesus Christ to have mercy on my poor soul, as I am dying without having been able to accomplish what I had it in my heart to do for Him!'[1] These were her last words, and they touched every one around her. St. Jerome hastened to reassure her. 'Have full confidence, dear child,' he replied; 'the white garments you have worn since your consecration to God ought to reassure you. Like them your soul is pure. Your conversion to God, it is true, is not of long standing; but it has been so generous and entire that it has not come too late.'[2] These words brought back a profound peace to Blesilla's soul, and a few moments after 'this white dove,' as St. Jerome calls her, 'flew to heaven, and the child of God, exiled here below, returned to her Father's house.'[3]

[1] Orate dominum Jesum ut mihi ignoscat, quia implere non potui quod volebam.—*Epist.* 22, *Super obitu Blesillæ.*

[2] Secura esto, mi Blesilla, sentiens vestimenta tua candida. Candor vestium sempiternæ virginitatis est puritas. Confidimus probare vera quæ dicimus; nunquam est sera conversio.—*Ibid.*

[3] Sarcinâ carnis abjectâ ad suum anima revolavit auctorem, et in antiquam possessionem diu peregrinata conscendit.—*Ibid.*

This was a terrible blow for Paula: so many pious joys, maternal hopes, and deep love were buried in that tomb! Her strong feeling got the better of her: the holy courageous widow disappeared in the broken-hearted mother. She insisted on a magnificent funeral for this her favourite child, as a last token of her deep love and inconsolable sorrow. All Rome followed her to the grave. Then came the coffin of the young widow, covered with a gold veil. Even Jerome's austerity yielded on this occasion, although all such pomp was abhorrent to his nature.[1] Paula thought she would have sufficient strength to follow her child to her last resting-place, but she had over-rated her powers. After having walked a few steps she fainted away, and was carried back to her house half dead. This sad sight moved the crowd to fresh murmurs. 'Is not this what we have always said?' they exclaimed. 'This poor lady is broken-hearted at the death of her daughter, whom they have killed with fasts and austerities, and who leaves no children, because they prevented her remarrying. Let us drive these miserable monks out of the town! Let us stone them! throw them into the Tiber! It is they who have bewitched this poor matron. One sees very well that they have done it in spite of her; for no Pagan mother ever so bewailed the death of her child!'[2]

The terrible sorrow which had overpowered Paula on the day of her daughter's funeral seemed only to increase as the days went on. In vain did she struggle to submit herself to the Divine will, and, by rapid signs of the cross, to prove her acceptance of whatever God might

[1] Ex more parantur exequiæ, et nobilium ordine præeunte, aureum feretro velamen obtenditur.—*Epist.* 22, *Super obitu Blesillæ.*

[2] Matronam miserabilem seduxerunt; quæ, quàm monacha esse noluerit, hinc probatur, quod nulla gentilium ita suos unquam fleverit filios.—*Ibid.*

lay upon her.[1] The image of Blesilla haunted her, and the idea that she had lost her for ever became so insupportable that she lost all appetite and sleep, and serious fears were entertained for her life.[2]

This was too much, and Jerome felt that he must try and summon all the strength which faith and charity could call forth to try and stop her tears; yet he himself was nearly as much in need of consolation. Of all his young disciples Blesilla was the one nearest his fatherly heart, and her death destroyed his fondest hopes. At her entreaty he had begun the Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiasticus; but now she was dead, he had no longer the heart to go on with it, and left it unfinished. But feeling that he must make an effort over himself to console Paula, he wrote her a letter—one so admirable in its delicacy of feeling and its Christian consolation that ecclesiastical antiquity contains nothing more tender or more beautiful. He begins, as all must do with those in sorrow, by weeping himself with Paula.

'"*Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes*," that I may weep, not like Jeremiah over the death of my people, nor like our Saviour over the woes of Jerusalem, but over the holiness, the sweetness, the innocence, the chastity, all the virtues which Blesilla has carried away with her into the tomb? It is not for her who has left us that we mourn, but for ourselves who have lost her! . . . My eyes are heavy with tears. Sobs stifle my voice. Grief makes me

[1] Cum os stomachumque signaret, et matris dolorem crucis niteretur impressione lenire, superabatur affectu.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Ante oculos tuos filiæ semper imago versatur. . . . Redit tibi in memoriam confabulatio ejus, blanditiæ, sermo, consortium; et quod his cares pati non potes. . . . Ululas et exclamitas, et quasi quibusdam facibus accensa, quantum in te est, tui semper homicida es.—*Epist.* 22, *Ad Paulam.*

speechless. . . . Alas! what is it I am saying? I wish to soothe her mother's sorrow, and I am myself as sad. A miserable comforter is he who cannot control his own grief, and finds tears and not words wherewith to console others. Yet Jesus Himself wept over Lazarus, because He loved him. I take our dear Lord to witness, O Paula!—that Saviour in whose presence your child now is, amidst the holy angels who are her companions—that I feel for you as no one else can do; that your anguish is mine. Was I not also her spiritual father? Had I not trained and fed that pure and beautiful soul with all the love with which our Lord Jesus Christ had filled my heart towards her?'[1]

But Jerome was not content with merely expressing his sympathy. He felt the necessity of answering that sorrowful complaint, that horrible doubt which assails suffering souls—even the holiest—in the apparently undeserved blows of Providence and the impenetrable mystery of the Divine decrees. Even over Jerome's soul this cloud had passed, for he writes:—

'And I also have felt the struggle in my soul, and my faith was troubled at the judgments of God. Like the Psalmist, I exclaimed: "*Then have I in vain justified my heart, and washed my hands among the innocent. . . . I studied, that I might know this thing which is a labour in my sight: until I went into the sanctuary of God, and understood concerning their last ends.*"'

Of this sanctuary of God faith alone finds the key; of this final end of all things faith alone has the secret.

[1] Lacrymis ora complentur, singultus occupat vocem et hærentem linguam commota viscera non laxant. Quid agimus? Matris prohibituri lacrymas, ipsi plangimus. . . . Non est optimus consolator quem proprii vincunt gemitus. Testor, mi Paula, Jesum, quem nunc Blesilla sequitur, eadem me dolorum perpeti tormenta quæ pateris patrem spiritu, nutrititium charitate.—*Epist.* 22, *Ad Paulam.*

In answer to the doubts to which poor human nature gives way Jerome replies by the certainty of the goodness of God :—

'God is good ; and all that comes from the good God must be necessarily good and for our eternal welfare. That is what the mother must say, with hearty acquiescence, when she loses her child, and the wife when she loses her husband—all, in fact, who are struck down by those terrible sorrows which fall upon human lives—sickness, suffering, loss of worldly goods, or of all we love most on earth. We say we believe in Christ. Well, then, let us learn to abandon ourselves unreservedly to His holy and adorable will in all things.'[1]

To this true and simple motive of consolation, drawn from the certitude of faith, St. Jerome adds another, taken from the equal certainty of hope, which he sets before Paula in that powerful language and with those allegorical views of Holy Scripture which she specially delighted in : 'Weep for the dead,' he exclaims, 'but let it be for those whom the abyss of eternity has swallowed up in its everlasting flames. But for those faithful souls whom troops of angels escort when they leave this world, and whom Christ Himself comes forward to meet on their entrance into Paradise, how can we mourn ? Rather let us grieve to be compelled to remain still longer ourselves in these earthly tabernacles : for as long as we are here below we are exiled from the presence of our Lord. Let us earnestly desire to be with Him ! to go to Him ! Let us exclaim : "How long and weary is our exile ! I have dwelt with the inhabitants of Kedar : and how strange were they to my soul !" For if Kedar means

[1] Bonus est Deus, et omnia quæ bonus facit bona sint necesse est. . . Qui se credere dicit Christo, in omnibus Christi judiciis gaudeat.—*Epist.* 22, *Ad Paulam.*

darkness, and in that way typifies the world, of which it is written: "The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness understandeth it not," let us congratulate our dear Blesilla, who from darkness has passed into light, and even at the outset of her conversion has deserved the crown of perfect virtue. Ah! if sudden death (which may God avert from all who love Him) had surprised her when she was entirely engrossed with the world and drunk with its pleasures, then we should, indeed, have had cause to weep for her with bitter tears. But since, by the grace of Jesus Christ, for the last four months she has trampled worldly considerations under foot, and given herself entirely to God, are you not afraid that our Lord may say to you: "Paula, do you regret that your child became Mine? You rebel at My judgments, but your tears outrage the love which made Me recall Blesilla to her true home." You refuse food, not from a spirit of penance, but from excess of sorrow. Well, such abstinence does not please me; such fasts rejoice only the enemy of souls. Is this, then, what you promised me when you made your religious profession? Is it for this that you have separated yourself from other matrons of your own rank? Let those weep without consolation who still wear this world's livery. If your faith had not failed you under the trial, if you believed truly that your child is still living, would you cry in this terrible manner because she has passed to a better world?[1] Faith does not forbid our tears, but it forbids our weeping like the Gentiles. We can forgive the tears of a mother, but there must be a measure in her sorrow. When I remember what she was, and that you are her

[1] Mens ista quæ plangit, sericarum vestium est. Si viventem crederes filiam, nunquam plangeres ad meliora migrasse.—*Epist.* 22, *Ad Paulam.*

mother, oh! I cannot blame your grief; but when I recollect that you are likewise a Christian, I would, Paula, that the Christian should console the mother.'[1]

'But,' he adds, 'perhaps the blow is still too recent, and, in spite of all my efforts to touch it lightly, perhaps I have reopened and irritated the wound I sought to heal.[2] But see the model which is given to us by Job; all possible sorrows and afflictions fell upon him at once; and yet, what does he do? He does not cease for one moment to look up to heaven with hope. "But he was a saint," you will say, and "God did not do all this to punish, but to prove him." Well, Paula, I will say but one word in answer to this: either you are a saint or a sinner. If you are a saint, your sorrow is to try you; if you are a sinner, how can you complain? You suffer less than you deserve.'[3] St. Jerome continues: 'If the thought of the certain happiness of Blesilla does not quench your tears, think of your young and gentle Eustochium, whose health is so delicate, and spare her the sight of your despair. She still needs so sorely her mother's love to guide and sustain her in the narrow path she has chosen.'[4] And then, leaving this tender tone of entreaty, he speaks with all the authority of a priest, and adds the following severe words: 'By dint of loving your children too much, beware lest you love your

[1] Ignoscimus matris lacrymis, sed quærimus modum in dolore. Si parentem cogito, non reprehendo quod plangis; si Christianam et monacham, istis nominibus mater excluditur.—*Epist.* 22, *Ad Paulam.*

[2] Recens vulnus est, et tactus iste, quo blandior, non tam curat quàm exasperat.—*Ibid.*

[3] Et tu e duobus elige quod velis; aut sancta es, et probaris; aut peccatrix, et injuste quereris, minora sustinens quam mereris.—*Ibid.*

[4] Parce filiæ cum Christo regnanti; parce saltem Eustochio tuæ, cujus parva adhuc ætas et rudis pene infantia te magistrâ dirigitur.—*Ibid.*

God too little![1] Believe me, it is a ruse of Satan's. He is striving to blind your eyes with tears by setting before you continually the image of the beloved child you have lost, and hopes, at the same time, to kill the mother of one who has triumphed over him, and to destroy likewise the sister who will be left orphaned and desolate. I do not wish to frighten you unnecessarily, and God is my witness that I speak to you as if we were at the foot of His tribunal; but these tears, which have no measure, and which bring you to the brink of the grave, are a sacrilege and a sign of infidelity. You burst forth in cries and tears, and it would seem as if you sought for death. Listen, then, to our Lord Jesus, who comes to you full of love, and says, "Your daughter is not dead, but sleepeth." You bend over the tomb you love, as Mary Magdalene did over that of our Saviour. Well, like the angel to Magdalene, I say to you, "*Why seek you the living among the dead?*" You, who are shedding so many tears over your child, do you not hear her cry, "O my mother! if you have ever loved me, if you have fed me with your milk, if you have formed my soul by your words and by the example of your virtues, oh! I conjure you not to envy me the glory and the happiness which I now enjoy! You fancy I have no longer a mother—but I have one here, the Mother of our Lord; that I have no more sisters—but I have found a multitude here whom I did not know. You weep because I have left the world: I pity you far more to be compelled to remain in it, exposed to all its sorrows and dangers. Oh! do you wish to continue to be my mother, that we may meet again some day? Think of one thing only—to

[1] Grandis in suos pietas, impietas in Deum est. . . . Detestandæ sunt lacrymæ, plenæ sacrilegio, incredulitate, quæ non habent modum, et usque ad viciniam mortis accedunt.—*Epist.* 22, *Ad Paulam.*

love our Lord, and be loved by Him. Thus you will still be my mother indeed"[1] How many more things would Blesilla say to you! And what earnest prayers is she now offering up to God for you!' Then, to show once more his tender sympathy, he adds: 'I hope she is praying for me, too, in return for what I strove to do for her, and that she will obtain the pardon of my sins; for you know well, O Paula! how devoted I was to her soul, and how much I bore and braved to save her.[2] . . . As for me, as long as a breath remains in my body, I promise that my mouth shall utter the name of Blesilla; I will dedicate my labours to her, and wherever my works are found there she will appear also. Her name will be coupled in my writings with those of Paula and Eustochium, and she will live in them immortally.'[3]

Certainly, after these eloquent and touching words, we must own that there is no consolation for the soul save in religion. The comfort it gives is no delusion. It rests on a solid truth, on undeniable certainty, and therefore it penetrates the deeper. Miserable, indeed, are those who have it not! There is no outside consolation which can touch the soul; and a heart without something to lean on falls back on itself, and is utterly crushed. Neither philosophic stoicism nor mundane

[1] Clamat nunc illa lugenti, 'Si unquam me amasti, mater, si tua ubera suxi, si in tuis instituta sum monitis, ne invideas gloriæ meæ. . . . At ego vestri sortem doleo, quos adhuc sæculi carcer includit. Si vis ut mater mea sis, cura placere Christo.'—*Epist.* 22, *Ad Paulam.*

[2] Mihique, ut de ejus mente securus sim, veniam impetrat peccatorum; quod monui, quod hortatus sum, quod invidiam propinquorum, ut salva esset, excepi.—*Ibid.*

[3] Dum spiritus hos regit artus, dum vitæ hujus fruimur commeatu, spondeo, promitto, polliceor, illam lingua mea resonabit, illi mei dedicabuntur labores; quocumque sermonis nostri monumenta pervenerint, illa cum meis opusculis peregrinabitur. Inter Paulæ Eustochiique nomen media ponetur. Numquam in meis moritura est libris.—*Ibid.*

frivolity is of any avail in such a case. Religion alone, relying on God's promises, points out to the desolate and aching heart a certain hope beyond the grave—a happiness which will not deceive. Separation is, after all, but a short absence: we shall meet each other again in a better world; and because religion keeps alive these links of hope between those who leave us and those who stay behind, she maintains, in an equally living and immortal manner, the love which united us here below. No; never does religion appear more divine than by the open grave!

CHAPTER IX.

AFTER THE DEATH OF BLESILLA GRIEF AND PIETY COMBINE TO DECIDE PAULA TO UNDERTAKE HER GREAT PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY PLACES—HER DEPARTURE FOR THE EAST.

(385.)

THIS beautiful letter of Jerome's had the desired effect. Paula's Christian courage was roused, and she became outwardly calm and resigned, though the inward wound could not be so easily healed. Blesilla made a void in her home which no one else could fill, and Rome became more and more insupportable to her. What she needed (as is often the case in a great sorrow) was an entire change of scene and thought. The journey to the East, which this sudden and unexpected death had postponed (although so much of its charm was lost for her now that Blesilla was no longer at hand to share in it), seemed to promise the best distraction which could be devised for this riven heart; and St. Jerome rejoiced when the idea revived in her mind. But Paula's family thought differently. While Pammachius and Paulina had done everything which the most tender love could inspire to soften her grief, the Pagan portion of her family became more and more exasperated against her. What the mob had cried out at Blesilla's funeral, 'That she had been killed by fasts and penances,' Paula's Pagan relations repeated with still more bitterness, and every unkind speech pierced her heart as with a dagger. On all sides

she suffered cruelly; and this journey to the East, which she felt was so necessary for her, was vehemently opposed by her Pagan relations, who dreaded the consequences of such a resolution. Soon other annoyances supervened, which disgusted her still more with Rome, and helped to drive her from it.

A few weeks after Blesilla's death, Pope Damasus died also. This event was a great calamity both to St. Jerome and St. Paula, for all the hatred which the austere monk had drawn down upon his head among the laxer members of the clergy and the patrician body by his extraordinary sanctity and wonderful conversions—a hatred which the affection of the Pope had alone kept within bounds—burst forth with unmitigated violence as soon as the holy pontiff's eyes were closed by death; and the successor of Pope Damasus, Pope Siricus, not daring to brave the unpopularity which pursued Jerome wherever he went, the holy monk was exposed without a protector to the assaults of his bitterest enemies. Not the least dangerous were the false friends who praised him to his face only to vilify him behind his back.[1] In a very short time this priest, formerly so revered throughout Rome, and whom the public voice had proclaimed worthy of the pontifical throne,[2] was declared by the serpent's tooth of malice and envy to be a hypocrite, a mischief-maker, a monster of iniquity. Everything was turned into a subject of reproach to him—even his walk, his attitudes, his laugh, his face, the sound of his voice.[3] Come what might, they were resolved to ruin him. In

[1] Osculabantur mihi manus quidam, et ore vipereo detrahebant.—*Epist.* 28, *Ad Asellam.*

[2] Omnium pene judicio dignus summo sacerdotio decernebar. . . . Dicebar sanctus, dicebar humilis et disertus.—*Ibid.*

[3] Ego probrosus, ego versipellis et lubricus; ego mendax et Satanæ

this universal dereliction he had the consolation of finding that his holy disciples who had known him so intimately—those venerable women who shed such a lustre of virtue and good works over Rome—remained inviolably faithful to him. Paula especially, whose bitter sorrow he had so lately shared, and whose child he had just buried, thought herself bound by every tie of gratitude and honour not to abandon him in a moment of such cruel persecution; and went on quietly with the preparations for her long journey.[1]

arte decipiens. . . . Alius incessum calumniabatur et risum; et ille vultui detrahebat. Hic in simplicitate aliud suspicabatur.—*Epist.* 28, *Ad Asellam.*

[1] Near the Farnese Palace in Rome an old convent still exists under the title of 'San Geronimo della Carita,' and occupies the site which tradition assigns to the former home of Paula and the residence of the holy doctor. But we have no special mention of this in St. Jerome's work. He only says: 'Antequam domum Sanctæ Paulæ nossem' (*Epist. ad Asellam*). In this convent there is an inscription mentioning that it was the house of St. Paula. Some centuries later it became a monastery; and there St. Philip Neri, who lived in it for thirty-three years, began his foundation of the Oratory. We here add the inscription:—

D. O. M.
Venerare . Hospes . Divinae . Gratiae . Prodigia .
Hanc . olim . Domum . S. Paula . et S. Hieronymus
Longo . vero . post . tempore . fratres . minores . incoluere .
Quibus . sub . Piissimæ . Congregationis . charitatis
Gubernaculo . Probatissimi . Succedentes . Presbyteri
Religiosorum . Familias . Confraternitatum . Sodalitia
Atque . Alia . Pia . Opera . Instituerunt .
In . Hac . Eadem . Domo .
Quam . Alii Matrem . Spiritus . Paradisum . Alii . Dictitarunt .
S. Philippus . Nerius . Triginta . Tres . Annos . Commoratus .
Prophetiae . Dono . Miraculorum . Copia . et . omni . Virtutum .
Genere . Claruit . Ac . Prima . Congreg . Oratorii . Fundamenta .
Posuit . Hos . Autem . Sacros . Parietes . Adeo . Dilexit .
Ut . Non . Nisi . Pontificia . Adactus . Auctoritate . Alio .
Commigravit . Retentis . Non . Solum . Pristinae . Vitæ . Institutis .
Sed . et . Cubiculi . sui . Clavibus .
Quod . Vel . Ipse . Quotidie . Vel . Per . Suos . Cupide . Inviserat .

We have mentioned that she had already made over the greater portion of her property to her children. Before her departure she was careful to complete all the legal formalities necessary for this important step, 'disinheriting herself thus on earth,' as St. Jerome says, 'so that she might gain a celestial inheritance.'[1]

We have also said that the young virgins of her domestic chapel were to accompany her, among whom were several old servants who had become like her sisters. St. Jerome speaks also of 'several old menservants whom she treated as brothers.'[2] These expressions seem to indicate that Paula, like Melania the younger, a little later on, had freed all the slaves whom Toxotius had left her. Jerome also was to have several companions on his travels: a young brother, named Paulinus, who had joined him at Rome, and certain holy and intimate friends, who had inseparably united their destinies to his own.

It was then that some of Jerome's bitterest enemies, in their rage and spite, took it into their heads, as a last resource,[3] and in despair at the failure of their previous attacks, to spread an atrocious calumny, similar to one which had been brought up against the illustrious Melania the elder, when she also spoke of going to the East. A wretched slave was found, and suborned with a large sum of money, to bring an absurd accusation against St. Jerome, which inculpated St. Paula herself: St. Paula, a woman of such austere

[1] Filiis, antequam proficisceretur, cuncta largita est, exhæredans se in terrâ, ut hæreditatem inveniret in cœlo.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Familiola, quam in utroque sexu de servis et ancillis in fratres sororesque mutaverat.—*Ibid.*

[3] Nihil mihi objicitur, . . . nisi postquam Ierosolymam Paula profiscitur.—*Epist. ad Asellam.*

purity that all Rome had recognised her virtue both before and after her widowhood! Paula, who since her husband's death had never admitted a living man to her table, be it who it may, not even St. Epiphanius when he lodged in her palace! Paula, whom St. Jerome himself had never seen but in the presence of others! – a holy widow, pale with fasting and vigils, spending her nights in prayers and tears to the extent of having nearly lost her sight from crying! a broken-hearted mother, whom a late terrible and sacred sorrow (if anything could be sacred to such hatred) had brought nearly to the brink of the grave![1] It was too much: and Jerome never rested till he had forced the wretched slave to appear before the magistrates, to own the way in which he had been bribed, to disavow the calumny, and to do ample justice to its victims.[2] The sympathy of all honourable men was excited by these disclosures; and those who had been shaken by the popular clamour came back to Jerome with renewed feelings of respect and esteem. But the rage of his calumniators only redoubled in consequence. Jerome had braved the storm boldly for some months, and would have gone on braving it, if only he himself had been involved; but disgusted at the audacity with which the name of one whom he so greatly revered had been mingled, in one common hatred, with his own; disgusted likewise at the constant interruption in his great works caused by these fruitless struggles, and tormented with a longing to return to his former solitude, far from Rome and

[1] Quam manducantem nunquam vidi. . . . lugens atque jejunans, fletibus pæne cæcata; quam continuis noctibus misericordiam Dei deprecantem sol sæpe reprehendit: cujus canticum psalmi, sermo evangelium, deliciæ continentia, vita jejunium.—*Epist. ad Asellam.*

[2] Crediderunt mentienti: cur non credunt neganti? Idem est homo ipse qui fuerat; fatetur insontem, qui noxium loquebatur.—*Ibid.*

the tumults and agitations of a great city, he thirsted more earnestly than ever for the East and the Desert, where he could drink once more, as before, at the fountain of biblical inspiration. Resolving, therefore, to profit by the favourable winds during the summer season (it was the month of August 385), he shook off the dust of Rome from his feet, and announced that he was about to depart for the East.

He left Rome accompanied by his young brother, Paulinus, his faithful friend, the priest Vincentius, who had followed him from Constantinople to Rome, and several other friends who only waited for him to give the signal of departure. Pammachius, Domnion, Oceanus, and a large number of priests and eminent Christians came to see him off at Ostia.[1] Paula and her children, Marcella and her virgins only accompanied him with their regrets and their tears.

Whilst the vessel was getting under way and the sails being hoisted, standing on the deck of the ship, his heart full of uncontrollable emotion, Jerome turned a last look on Rome and the noble souls whom he was leaving behind. And as a few moments remained, he retired into a corner and there wrote, '*tumultuairement et bien dolent en son cœur*,'[2] as an old historian tells us, a farewell letter to the venerable Asella, in which one sees how wounded and hurt that noble soul was at the injustice and meanness of the accusations brought against him; although at the same time his

[1] Mense Augusto, flantibus Etesiis, cum sancto presbytero Vincentio, et adolescente fratre, et aliis monachis, navim in Romano portu securus ascendi, maximâ me sanctorum frequentiâ prosequente. — *Contra Ruffinum*, lib. iii.

[2] *Histoire de Monseigneur St. Jérôme et de Madame Saincte Paule*, by Louis Lasserre, Canon of the Church of St. Martin of Tours. Paris, 1530.

conscience and the strength of his faith enabled him to rise superior to such allegations.

'Shall I ever be able to express my gratitude to you all in sufficiently warm terms?' he exclaims. 'No; God alone can repay you the good you have done me—you who have shown me, all unworthy that I am, more charity in Jesus Christ than I ever should have dared to hope for or imagine.'[1] And then, alluding to the respect and affection which Asella had never ceased to show him during the storm, he adds: 'For the three years I have lived in Rome, have I ever been seen in company with a doubtful character? Have I been found in the salons of ladies robed in gorgeous attire and sparkling with precious stones? Have I received from any living soul a farthing of gold or silver or any kind of salary? Dare they bring up against me a single light or unsuitable word or look? A numerous circle of virgins and widows often surrounded me, it is true, to whom, as well as I could, I interpreted the Sacred Scriptures. This study brought us into a sort of confidence and intimacy, if you will. But let them speak for themselves: did they ever remark in me the smallest thing unworthy of a disciple of Jesus Christ?' Then referring to Melania, fifteen years before, and all she had had to suffer for the same reason, he exclaims: 'O envy! whose serpent tooth bites itself! O. wiles of Satan! which always pursue holiness in whatever shape! These, then, are the women whom they dare insult by their cruel suspicions! Paula, Melania—all who have trampled riches and luxury under foot and hoisted the

[1] Si tibi putem gratias a me referri posse, non sapiam. Potens est Deus super personâ meâ sanctæ animæ tuæ restituere quod meretur. Ego enim indignus, nec æstimare unquam potui, nec optare, ut mihi tantum in Christo largireris affectum.

standard of the Cross of their Saviour as their ensign! Ah! if they would only go to Baïa, and adorn themselves with jewels and exquisite scents; if they had only placed their riches and their widowhood at the disposal of the world and its gaieties, then they would be looked upon as respectable matrons, as saints even! But no. It is to attract attention, I suppose, that they have clothed themselves in sackcloth and ashes; they wished to go to hell by fasts and penances; and they are not to lose themselves by seeking the applause of the great world with the crowd! If it were only Pagans and Jews who held such language, one might console oneself with the thought that their conduct was displeasing only to those who did not believe in Jesus Christ. But what a miserable thing it is to see Christians, or people calling themselves Christians, forget themselves in such a manner! to hear them blaming those who strive to walk in the narrow path of perfection; not to perceive the beam in their own eyes, while looking out for the mote in their neighbour's; and excusing themselves by saying that there is no more such virtue or sanctity to be found on earth!'[1] But then, all of a sudden, he leaves these miserable scandalmongers, and, soaring to nobler heights, he rejoices at the conformity which these trials afford with the life of Jesus Christ, and at the liberty which he feels he has, in consequence, attained. 'We should con-

[1] O invidia primum mordax tu! O Satanæ calliditas semper sancta persequens! Nullæ aliæ Romanæ urbi fabulam præbuerunt, nisi Paula et Melania, quæ crucem Domini quasi quoddam pietatis levavere vexillum! Si Baïas peterent, unguenta eligerent, divitias et viduitatem haberent materiem luxuriæ et libertatis, Dominæ vocarentur et sanctæ. Nunc in sacco et cinere formosæ vellent videri et in gehennam ignis cum jejuniis et pædore descendere; videlicet non eis licet applaudente populo perire cum turbis. Si gentiles hanc vitam carperent. . . . Nunc vero proh dolor! Christiani . . . . remedium pœnæ suæ arbitrantur si nemo sit sanctus.—*Epist. ad Asellam.*

sider ourselves happy,' he exclaims, 'to have been worthy of this world's hatred. Jesus Christ, my God, has been hated like me. The Jews called Him, as they do me, a sorcerer, one who had a devil. The Apostles likewise were treated as seducers. . . . But now I leave all these scenes far behind. Fool that I was to wish to sing the song of the Lord in a strange land! to leave Sinai for Egypt! I forgot what was said in the Gospel, that he who goes out of Jerusalem falls among thieves.' And then, appealing from the passions of men to the judgments of the just Judge, and addressing a last farewell to those noble ladies whom he had guided in the narrow way of perfection, he adds:[1] 'Salute Paula and Eustochium, who, whether the world wills it or not, will ever be my very dear sisters in Jesus Christ. Salute the venerable Albina, our mother, and her daughter Marcella, our sister; and Marcellina and Felicitas, and the rest; and say to them, "We shall all appear one day before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, and then the secrets of all souls shall be revealed." Keep me in your remembrance, O admirable models of virginal chastity! and by your fervent prayers appease the waves under my feet.'

Such were the adieux of Jerome to the pious band of women whom he was leaving, and most of whom he was never to see again. History has recorded his words and immortalised these pure and illustrious friendships, which envy in vain strove to tarnish, and which have remained as the most touching and glorious aureola of the holy doctor. After all, the persecution which drove him

[1] Saluta Paulam et Eustochium, velit nolit mundus, in Christo meas. Saluta matrem Albinam, sororemque Marcellam, Marcellinam quoque et sanctam Felicitatem, et dic eis, 'Ante tribunal Christi simul stabimus: ibi apparebit quâ mente quis vixerit.' Memento mei, exemplum virginitatis insigne, fluctusque maris tuis precibus mitiga.—*Epist. ad Asellam.*

from Rome (to quote one of the earliest biographers of St. Jerome—Gennadius, Bishop of Marseilles) was, in reality, happy in its results, both for the sake of his genius, which developed itself more freely in solitude, and for the sake of the Church itself, which thereby gained an immortal treasure in his valuable commentaries on the Books of Holy Writ.[1]

This departure awakened the hope in Paula's family that she would give up her projected visit to the East. But her decision was irrevocably taken. Her heart needed to pour out its love and sorrow on the very sites which witnessed the sufferings of our Saviour, and a powerful internal attraction drew her onwards. God, who willed her to undertake this journey, which was to decide her whole future life, removed an impediment which would otherwise have hindered her steps. Her son, for whom, as St. Jerome states, she had an extraordinary affection, had not yet received the grace of baptism; but he was no longer under the influence of his uncle. Hymetius was dead, and his aunt Prætextata, after having wept over the graves of both her husband and children, had followed them to the grave. These sudden deaths, in which many persons thought they saw the judgment of God, had made a deep impression on Paula's son. Filled with admiration for his pious mother, and greatly touched by his sister Blesilla's death, he chose this moment to prepare himself for baptism, so as to give his mother the consolation and joy of seeing him at last enlisted under the banner of Jesus Christ. Soon after he married a cousin of Marcella's, a charming and deeply pious girl, to whom Paula was much attached. This marriage, which had long been a favourite project of Marcella's, filled Paula with joy and removed all anxiety from

[1] Dom Martianay, *Life of St. Jerome*, Book IV. vol. xi.

her mind as regarded the future of her son. On the other hand, Rufina, who was just growing up, would be left during Paula's absence under the care of Pammachius and Paulina, while Marcella would be as a second mother to her. None of her family would therefore suffer in consequence of this journey to the East which Paula so earnestly desired. But if she did not come back? If, under a special and mysterious impulse of Divine grace, she were induced to find in the Holy Places that perfection of the monastic state to which she aspired, but to which she could not attain in Rome? These thoughts passed rapidly through her mind, and often troubled, though they could not deter her. She had arrived, by a succession of trials, to understand the meaning of giving herself up unreservedly to the guiding of God's providence, and to realise the harmony of all affections with the one great love of God. She had listened to that Sovereign Voice which speaks to certain souls and gives them courage for every sacrifice, even for those which would most nearly touch her mother's heart.

At last, her preparations being completed, one calm autumn day, in 385, a goodly company of patricians were seen wending their way by the Appian Road to the Roman Gate on the road to Ostia. Among them were several wearing the dress of widows and virgins consecrated to God: these were Paula, Eustochium, and their companions: then came the numerous members of Paula's family, including her brother, whom Jerome only mentions on this occasion, and her son-in-law, Pammachius, who perhaps had not combated, like the rest, his mother-in-law's resolve, but who felt the separation deeply; lastly, and which was hardest of all, Paula's three children whom she was about to leave behind, Paulina, Rufina, and the young Toxotius, who had in

sisted upon accompanying her on board, in order to try, by a last effort, to prevent her undertaking so long a voyage from which, perhaps, she would never return.[1] Marcella and Fabiola doubtless accompanied their greatest friend; and Paula would gladly have induced the former to accompany her had not urgent duties detained her in Rome—the great age of her mother Albina, whom she could not desert, and the young girls to whom she acted a mother's part. But the two friends knew well that absence would not weaken a love like theirs, and that neither time nor space could divide their souls. When they arrived on the seashore, and the final moment of separation had come, the scene became heart-breaking. After all the sorrows she had passed through, and all the painful scenes and struggles she had had to encounter with her family, Paula might well have imagined that nothing more painful could possibly be laid upon her. But she was mistaken. Tenderly as she had always loved her children, she had not realised the full strength of her love till it came to the moment of parting with them. She first bravely took leave of her relations and friends, and then strained her children to her heart in a long and speechless embrace as if she should never see them again; after which, taking Eustochium's arm, she walked firmly up the ladder on board ship. All her family remained on the shore, their eyes fixed upon her. Paula, without shedding a tear, raised her eyes to heaven, as if seeking strength and consolation there. A terrible struggle was going on in her mother's heart between the love of God and of her children. The love

[1] Descendit ad portum, fratre, cognatis, affinibus et, quod hic majus est, liberis prosequentibus, et clementissimam matrem pietate vincere cupientibus.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

of God conquered: but what it cost her, God only knew.

'When the wind filled the sails, and the rowers began to ply their oars, Toxotius stretched out his arms to her, imploring her to return: Rufina, on the eve of her marriage, did not cry, but seemed to ask her, in silent anguish, why she would not wait to bless her nuptials.' Paula told St. Jerome that that moment was one of the most bitter in her whole life. 'Her bowels were, as it were, torn in pieces. She felt as if her soul were being separated from her body; but she struggled against the torture, and her heroism was the more remarkable as it arose from the greatness of her love. In this final struggle she leant for support on the brave and tender Eustochium, the companion both of her voyages and of her sacrifices. But the ship was making way and gaining the open sea, and all the passengers were fixing their eyes on the receding shores, with that longing, lingering gaze so dear to those who are about to leave for ever their native land. Paula alone turned her eyes away from the shore, for fear that her heart should quite break at the sight of those, the separation from whom had well-nigh killed her.'[1]

Thus was this terrible separation accomplished. St. Jerome might well say in his conclusion, 'Paula loved

[1] Jam carbasa tendebantur et remorum ductu navis in altum protrahebatur. Parvus Toxotius manus tendebat in littore. Rufina jam nubilis ut suas exspectaret nuptias tacens obsecrabat. Et tamen illa siccos ad cœlum tendebat oculos, pietatem in filios pietate in Deum superans. Torquebantur viscera, et quasi a suis membris distraheretur cum dolore pugnabat, in eo cunctis admirabilior quod magnam vinceret charitatem, et amorem filiorum majore in Deum amore contemnens, in solâ Eustochio, quæ et propositi et navigationis ejus comes erat, acquiescebat. Sulcabat interim navis mare et cunctis qui cum eâ vehebantur littora respicientibus, ipsa aversos tenebat oculos, ne videret quos sine tormento videre non poterat.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

her children more than any woman had ever done before. Christianity mingling with her Roman temperament made her tender but not soft. And Jesus Christ, while touching her soul to the quick, and awakening hitherto unknown sensibilities in her heart, yet steeped her in that true strength which is the fruit of Faith because it is the offspring of Love.'

We cannot help here drawing a parallel between St. Paula and a saint nearer our own century, St. Chantal. The analogy between these two souls is surprising: both of the highest rank, both having tasted the greatest happiness and the greatest sorrow in this life—the joys of a holy union, and the inconsolable grief of widowhood, together with the loss of dearly loved children; both directed by a great saint; both destined to open one of those sanctuaries of prayer and praise which do more for the safety of nations than science and politics; both having also to overcome the same obstacles to follow the same vocation. Happier than ourselves, the biographer of St. Chantal found her history in contemporary documents, and has been able, in his admirable work, to revive all the touching details which accompanied the departure of St. Chantal from her home. For us, only a few lines from St. Jerome retrace the salient points of the great drama we have been striving to represent. They are sufficient, however, to enable us to recognise, though at such a distance and in such a different era, the same breath of God's Holy Spirit in two souls equally attuned to the same sound. And of St. Paula's sacrifice we may say, in the language of St. Chantal's biographer, 'Like all great inspirations of holiness, it surprises and charms us at the same time. When we see a soul so strong and yet so overwhelmed with sorrow, but still docile to the voice of God, one

acquires the certainty that in this fearful struggle between the two strongest affections of which the human soul is capable, Divine love conquers without maternal love being defeated; tears fill our eyes, and we can only admire in silence.'

And that nothing might be wanting in the analogy between St. Paula and St. Chantal, we shall see the spiritual daughter of St. Jerome, when she decided to remain in the East, follow her children in the world with the same infinite tenderness as, in later times, did the spiritual daughter of St. Francis of Sales; and lose them all, one after the other, with a sorrow which was indescribable. Whereby, again, we see how wise was the inspiration which led those two great saints to follow the Divine call, in spite of the ties of blood. This Rufina, who silently entreated her mother to wait for her wedding, was never, after all, to be married: death carried her off before the day of her bridal. Toxotius, too, was destined to die in the flower of his youth; and it was Eustochium who was to receive his orphan daughter at Bethlehem, and place her under the wing of St. Jerome. The great designs of God would be impossible, if the souls He chooses were to draw back before every human obstacle.

In such exceptional vocations, God has deep designs which superficial souls do not even suspect: instead of the children who were deprived of her bodily presence indeed, but not of her love or her protection, and whom death was so soon to tear from her, God gave Paula, in her Bethlehem convent, children without number. There, too, a few years later, those very patricians who had so railed and fought against Paula's vocation, found a refuge when dispersed by the barbarians after Rome was taken by Alaric. And, finally, when a new race had replaced

the old, these religious sanctuaries, which Paula's example was to multiply, sent forth a perfume of love and charity which fascinated even the children of the barbarians and caused Christianity and civilisation to penetrate among those indomitable races.

Great fecundity is always the prize of great and heroic sacrifices.

CHAPTER X.

ST. PAULA IN THE EAST—HER PILGRIMAGES TO THE HOLY PLACES.

(385.)

'A WOMAN, when she is in labour, hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.' This is an image of the interior torments which generally accompany great sacrifices, and the profound calm, joy, and peace which almost invariably follow them. God thus repays, by the sweetnesses with which He fills the soul, the price of what we have given up for His love; and Paula, when these moments of anguish were passed, felt this heavenly joy in her heart.

At first she remained silent and immovable on the deck of the ship, entirely absorbed in her sad thoughts; but the weight on her heart being by degrees removed, a kind of enthusiasm filled her soul. It was at the sight of Pontia, an island facing the coasts of Campania, that she first broke silence. This island was full, to her, of solemn memories. It was there that the illustrious Flavia Domitilla, of the family of Domitian, was imprisoned in the first century. Along the shores were a series of little cells dug out of the rock, where this noble lady lived for many years before she was crowned with

martyrdom. Paula pointed out these cells to Eustochium and her companions, and her faith took fire at the sight, as 'on the wings of thought,' writes St. Jerome, 'she flew beyond the seas towards Jerusalem and the Holy Places, where she was to bury her life in a long martyrdom of penance.'[1]

Propelled by a favourable wind, the vessel glided rapidly over the sea, running along the Italian coast; but, in her holy impatience, the passage seemed long to Paula, and the ship, although such a good sailer, went too slowly for her wishes.[2] Very soon they passed by Scylla and Charybdis, those bugbears of ancient navigators; and going through the Straits of Messina, found themselves in the Ionian Sea; and whilst the shores of Italy receded from their sight, a south-east wind brought them to Methonia, on the coast of Messenia. One would have thought that the sight of Greece would have caused Paula some pleasurable emotion. But this Roman matron, although familiar, from her literary education, with all the historical remembrances with which that land is stored, and bearing in her veins the blood of the ancient Argos kings, felt no thrill of delight when the vessel touched the Hellenic shores: her heart and soul were filled with other thoughts. Hardly did she give herself the time to rest for a few hours in the port, although, according to the poet quoted by St. Jerome, she was soaked with sea-water.[3] The vessel speedily resumed her course, passing through the beau-

[1] Delata ad insulam Pontiam quam clarissimæ quondam feminarum sub Domitiano principe pro confessione nominis Christiani Flaviæ Domitillæ nobilitavit exilium, vidensque cellulas in quibus illa longum martyrium duxerat, sumptis fidei alis, Hierosolymam et sancta loca videre cupiebat.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Tardi erant venti, et omnis pigra velocitas.—*Ibid.*

[3] Et sale tabentes artus in littore ponunt.—Virgilii *Æneid.*

tiful Gulf of Messenia, doubling the Capes Teneros and Malea, situated at the two extreme points of Laconia, and, leaving the famous Cythera to the right, sailed gaily into that beautiful sea so peopled by Pagan imaginations with mythological fancies. The ship shaped her course to the right, leaving on one side the white Cyclades, which form the most beautiful combination of land and water imaginable; and on the other the distant mountains of Crete. Paula soon came to Rhodes, that island equally famous in antiquity and in the Christian era; and after having coasted for some time along the Lycian shore, she landed at last at the port of Salamis, in the island of Cyprus.[2] She hastened to this town to see St. Epiphanius, whose words, three years before, had first kindled the flame which was to have so decisive an influence on her whole future life. The venerable bishop was waiting for her on the shore, too glad to be able to repay in any way the noble hospitality he had received from her in Rome. As soon as Paula perceived him, she threw herself weeping at his feet. Epiphanius, seeing how exhausted she was with the fatigues of her voyage, and foreseeing in the long journey she was about to undertake many things which would still more try her health and courage, wished her to remain some days at Salamis to rest herself; but the island of Cyprus contained too little of real interest for a Christian pilgrim to induce her to take a long rest there.[3]

This island, formerly consecrated to Venus, and famous for its Pagan temples, was very different from

[1] Per Maleam et Cytheram, *sparsasque per æquor Cycladas et crebris freta consita terris*, post Rhodum et Lyciam, tandem venit Cyprum.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Sancti et venerabilis Epiphanii pedibus provoluta, decem diebus ab eo retenta est, non in refectionem, ut ille arbitrabatur, sed in opus Dei, ut re probatum est.—*Ibid.*

what it had once been. Paul and Barnabas had passed there, and purified it by introducing Christianity among its inhabitants; and as if the more emphatically to mark the victory which the Divine Son of the Blessed Virgin had won over the odious goddess, God permitted that the purest virgins and the most ascetic lives should blossom on the soil which Paganism had the most profaned. One of the most illustrious patriarchs of the Desert, the revered master of St. Epiphanius, Hilarion, flying beyond the seas to escape the praise of men, had come here to hide himself from Palestine. He had died here, and his tomb was near the ruins of an ancient temple of Venus. This sepulchre, as well as the renown of the disciple whom he had left behind him on the island, St. Epiphanius, attracted many pious souls to its shores, eager to be formed under the direction of so eminent a master in the discipline of monastic life. The island of Cyprus was then filled with monasteries, founded and protected by the holy bishop Epiphanius; and holy hymns, instead of lewd songs, re-echoed in those sacred woods where the ancient mysteries were formerly celebrated. Eleven Christian bishops occupied seven episcopal sees, of which the metropolis was Salamis. Such was, then, the island of Cyprus, destined to shelter, in future ages, the last descendants of the kings enthroned by the Christian knights on the tomb of the Saviour.

Paula profited by her stay in the island to visit the monasteries and see with her own eyes that way of life which she was about to study in the East at its source; and wherever she went she marked her passage by abundant alms.[1]

[1] Omnia illius regionis lustrans monasteria, prout potuit, refrigeria sumptuum fratribus dereliquit, quos amor sancti viri de toto orbe huc conduxerat.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

She was especially anxious to visit Hilarion's tomb. It was empty. The relics of the saint had been secretly stolen by the inhabitants of his native town. 'But,' as the Cyprian Christians exclaimed, 'they could not carry off his spirit.' Ten days were thus passed in pious expeditions and long talks with Epiphanius; after which Paula re-embarked, and arrived at Seleucia, from whence, mounting the Orontes, she landed at last at Antioch.

There Jerome, and the priests who had accompanied him from Rome, awaited her, with the bishop Paulinus. This brilliant metropolis of Syria, which had been, after Jerusalem, the second cradle of Christianity, might have appeared to Paula a suitable residence to await the return of the fine season: for it was the depth of winter, and the mountains of Lebanon, which she had to cross, were all covered with snow. Jerome and Paulinus represented this to Paula in the strongest terms, to induce her to remain at Antioch. But since she had touched the soil of the East her holy impatience to see Jerusalem had revived, and all delays seemed to her insupportable. To see the Holy Places, to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ, to tread the ground where He had shed His blood, then to visit the anchorites and cenobites in their solitude, to study their virtues, and breathe their spirit—these thoughts filled her whole mind and heart. Eustochium and her young companions shared her ardour. The departure had to be organised with the utmost expedition; and the whole caravan, mounted on horses, dromedaries, and asses, started for Jerusalem. St. Jerome and his friends accompanied them. 'It was marvellous,' he writes, 'to see that delicate and noble lady, who formerly could only go about in Rome carried in a litter by her slaves, bravely traversing those icy plains on a donkey's back, without ever dreaming of fear or fatigue.'[1]

[1] Mediâ hyeme, calente ardore fidei, femina nobilis, quæ priu

From Antioch to Jerusalem the way was indeed long and painful for a woman as delicate as Paula. It is difficult in these days to realise the perils of the great journeys of antiquity. In one sense, however, they were better off than ourselves. Rome had intersected all the countries she had conquered with beautiful military roads for the passage of her legions—roads the remains of which even now excite our admiration. Careful itineraries, pointing out the different stages where relays of horses and cattle could be obtained, the names of each station, and the distance between each, were drawn up by order of the emperors. For a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in particular, there was, for the use of the Western nations, a celebrated itinerary, the most curiously detailed of all those which antiquity has left us—that one entitled 'From Bordeaux to Jerusalem,' drawn up, in 333, from official guide-books, with the most exact measurements, which conducted the French pilgrims from Gaul to Constantinople, and thence, by Asia Minor and Syria, to Judea, every stage being marked to Jerusalem itself; and in the Holy City the different stations were pointed out very much in the same way as they are to this day. It was that route—that is to say, the Roman way which coasted the shores of Syria, Phœnicia, and Judea—which Paula chose on this occasion. Did she, before leaving Antioch, visit the Chalcis desert, where St. Jerome had passed so many years in those hard penitential exercises? St. Jerome is silent on this point, and only alludes in a few words to her journey across Cælo-Syria and Phœnicia to Beyrout. But no sooner had she arrived at the spots associated with biblical reminiscences, than Jerome follows her step by step, and tells us all the towns she passed

eunuchorum manibus portabatur, asello sedens profecta est.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

through, and all the emotions she felt in seeing them. Thoroughly versed as she was in the knowledge of the sacred writings, each name reminded her of some event either in the Jewish or Christian history. Jerome, too, was there, with his astonishing memory and his prodigious knowledge of Scripture, to quote or interpret the passages which referred to each place through which they passed; taking careful notes as he went along. Science and piety had thus each their share in this deeply interesting journey. The details given by Jerome are very precious, and enable us to follow Paula day by day, and thus to make with her the pilgrimage of the Holy Places in the fourth century.

After having, then, passed the Roman colony of Beyrout, and the ancient town of Sidon, against which Isaiah had prophesied, the first town in Judea which she came upon was Sarepta, of the ancient tribe of Asa. This place was full of recollections of Elijah. There was the little tower, turned into an oratory, which served as a retreat to the man of God during the famine, and where the poor widow, whose son he brought to life, fed him with a cake of flour and a cruse of oil, which was miraculously renewed each day. Paula knelt in this little oratory and adored Jesus Christ, who had inspired the Prophets. Then the famous city of Tyre came in sight—Tyre also struck by the maledictions of the Prophet. It reminded Paula of one of the great scenes in the Acts of the Apostles. St. Paul, on his journey from Asia to Jerusalem, where chains awaited him, stopped there seven days. When he left, the Christians, who had in vain striven to detain him, accompanied him, weeping, to the seashore, where they knelt down and prayed. Paula looked with pious reverence on the shore where the Apostle had so touchingly parted with his disciples. From Tyre they

arrived at Ptolemaïs, the ancient 'Coth' of Holy Writ, from whence they could already perceive the white-topped mountains of Carmel. Then, after having ridden along the graceful gulf which, following the bendings of the shore, rounds the long promontory upon which Carmel is situated, they gazed with delight on this mountain, so celebrated in Holy Scriptures, and so filled with recollections of the Prophet Elias. From thence they traversed the field of Mageddon, which reminded them of the death of the pious King Josias; then they came into the country of the Philistines.[2] 'And there,' writes St. Jerome, 'a great contrast struck them: a mass of ruins stretched along the shore, half covered with sand.' It was the ancient Dor, now called Dandora, a town once so powerful that Antiochus required an army of 120,000 and a numerous fleet to undertake its siege. At a little distance, by a contrary fate, the ancient Tower of Straton became under the Herods the flourishing Cæsarea, and displayed with pride its ramparts and public edifices, which to-day are all in ruins, but which then formed a magnificent city.[3]

Cæsarea was the largest town which the pilgrims had yet come upon on their route, and the most important both in a political and religious sense. It was the residence of the Roman Governor of the Province; it was also the most important metropolis of the Eastern Church,

[1] Bœrito Romanâ coloniâ et antiquâ urbe Sidone derelictâ, in Sareptæ littore Heliæ ingressa est turriculam; in quâ adorato Domino Salvatore, per arenas Tyri, in quibus Paulus genua fixit, pervenit ad Coth, quæ nunc Ptolemaïs dicitur.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Per campos Mageddo, Josiæ necis conscios, intravit terram Philistim.—*Ibid.*

[3] Mirata ruinas Dor, urbis quondam potentissimæ, et versâ vice Stratonis turrim, ab Herode rege Judæ in honorem Cæsaris Augusti Cæsaream nuncupatam.—*Ibid.*

and a renowned centre for Christian study. The illustrious Origen had taught there; the learned Eusebius, many of whose works St. Jerome had already translated, had been its bishop. The library of this town was rich in precious manuscripts. This fact, together with the many recollections attached to it, had decided Jerome and Paula to spend some days there. There they saw the famous amphitheatre where Titus, after the ruin of Jerusalem, celebrated his triumph by magnificent games and shows, during which 3,000 Jews were massacred. They also visited the house of Cornelius the centurion, whom St. Peter had baptised after his miraculous vision; and the residence of Philip, one of the seven deacons: both of which had been converted into oratories. This last sanctuary was specially interesting to Eustochium and her companions: they were enchanted to see the house of the deacon, with the rooms of his three daughters, who were virgins and prophetesses.[1] At Cæsarea, too, as at Tyre, there were endless remembrances of St. Paul; it was there that, in answer to the entreaties of the Christians who were pleading with him not to go to Jerusalem and to expose himself to the fury of the Jews, he spoke those beautiful words: 'What do you mean by weeping and afflicting my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but to die also in Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus.'

Paula found great pleasure in reading, on the spot itself, those beautiful passages in the Acts of the Apostles. But what interested Jerome most in Cæsarea was the Library; and he explored its contents with the utmost care. He found, among other things, the original copy of the *Hexapla* of Origen, that magnificent edition of the

[1] Cornelii domum Christi vidit ecclesiam, et Philippi ædiculas, et cubicula quatuor virginum prophetarum.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

Bible where, alongside of the Hebrew text, were placed, verse by verse, the four most celebrated Greek versions.[1] Paula obtained permission for an exact copy to be taken of this philological *chef-d'œuvre* of the great Alexandrian critic at her own cost, which she gave to St. Jerome, to whom it was of immense use at Bethlehem in his future Biblical studies. Jerome himself corrected with the most minute care (either at this time or on a later occasion) this copy of the original MS., preserved with such care in the archives of Cæsarea.[2]

From this town the French itinerary, turning suddenly to the east, directed its followers to pass by Scythopolis, towards the Jordan; and afterwards returned, by Sichem, to Jerusalem. But Paula, anxious to reach the Holy City as soon as possible, followed the Roman route, which, to avoid the steep and rocky paths by the seashore, went inland through the plains of Sharon. This road would have been beautiful in any other season, for on the left were the ever-receding mountains of Carmel; on the right the vast blue sea; and before them was stretched the great and fertile plain of Sharon, descending from stage to stage towards the shore. But to the barren sadness of winter was added the dismal sight of the ruins which everywhere cropped up under their feet. The old names even had been lost, and they met nothing but vestiges of past

[1] The *Hexapla* of Origen was an edition of the Bible with six parallel columns, containing on the first two columns the Hebrew text in Hebrew and Greek characters; then on the other four the most celebrated Greek versions, that of the Septuagint and the more recent ones of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. At one glance, therefore, one could see the different versions, with their discrepancies.

[2] Nobis curæ fuit omnes veteris legis libros, quos vir doctus Adamantius in Hexapla digesserat de Cæsariensi Bibliothecâ descriptos, ex ipsis authenticis emendare.—*Præf. ad Comment. in Titum.*

grandeur on that land which had witnessed so many of God's miracles and such revolutions among men.

The first town they came upon in this new route was the modern Antipatris, so called from Herod, son of Antipas; but Paula was surprised to see even that town half destroyed. From Antipatris they arrived at a little town memorable in Christian tradition as having been the scene of two miracles of St. Paul—*i.e.* the resurrection of Dorcas and the cure of Eneas. This was the ancient Lydda, then called Diospolis,[1] which possessed a famous Jewish school. Jerome, who never lost an opportunity of gaining some fresh science, hastened to visit the school and enter into conversation with the doctors, among whom, later, he sought a Hebrew master. Lydda was only a few miles from Ramleh, the country of Joseph of Arimathea—that faithful Jew who had the honour of giving a sepulchre to our Saviour. From thence there was but a comparatively short journey for our pilgrims to Jerusalem; but, however anxious Paula might have been to arrive at the Holy City, Jerome succeeded in persuading her to go backwards a little to visit the famous Joppa.

Joppa, called in these days Jaffa, was one of the oldest towns and most frequented ports of Palestine. It was there that Hiram's fleet cast anchor, bearing the cedars of Lebanon; there, again, the Prophet Jonas embarked when flying from the voice of God. The Greeks had likewise immortalised these shores with mythological fables, and the inhabitants of Joppa showed curious travellers the rock where they pretended to see the mark of the chains which had confined Andromeda.

[1] Deinde Antipatrida semirutum oppidulum, quod de patris nomine Herodes vocaverat, et Lyddam versam in Diospolim, Dorcadis atque Æneæ resurrectione ac sanitate inclytam.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

Jerome, absorbed in his literary pursuits, did not fail to visit the rock; but Paula felt a greater curiosity to go and visit a humble little chapel on the sea-shore which had been the abode of Simon the tanner, and where St. Peter lodged when he had the symbolical vision of the conversion of the Gentiles.[1]

After having visited Joppa, Paula, retracing her steps, traversed successively Bethoron, the Upper and Lower—two towns built by Solomon and ruined in the vicissitudes of war—and Emmaus, where our Saviour made Himself known to His disciples by breaking of bread. She perceived from thence to her right the famous fields of Ajalon and Gabaon, where Joshua, fighting against the five kings, had commanded the sun and moon to stop to give him time to achieve his victory. Then they came to the site of a town which had been completely razed to the ground, the town of Gabaa. This place had witnessed a great crime, and remained, the monument of a great Divine vengeance: it was there that the wife of the Levite of the tribe of Ephraim who had been assassinated was cut in twelve pieces, and these pieces sent to the twelve tribes to arouse their indignation. As a punishment for the crime of the Gabaites, their town was destroyed, and the whole tribe of Benjamin exterminated, saving 300 men, who were reserved, writes St. Jerome, because the guilty tribe owed the Apostle Paul to the Church and the world. Struck by these reminiscences, Paula willingly lingered among the ruins. She was drawing near to Jerusalem, and felt the want of profound recollection of soul before entering the Holy City.

[1] Joppen quoque, fugientis portum Jonæ, et, ad aliquid perstringam de fabulis poetarum, religatæ ad saxum Andromedes spectatricem.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

The country round Jerusalem had already in the fourth century that desolate appearance which, all travellers allow, is its present characteristic. No town in the world has a similar horizon, as no town has a similar destiny. Mountains denuded of all vegetation, a solemn desert, and doleful ruins surround this town, at once sacred and reproved. By an extraordinary combination of circumstances, one recognises the fact that the judgments of God have passed over this land, and the Divine impression makes itself felt in the soul with a kind of religious terror. But very soon other thoughts follow and soften these first impressions: His Divine love has also appeared as well as His justice on this soil. The Cross of Christ rises before the pilgrim's thoughts, and the remembrance of His holy passion and of His precious blood shed for the salvation of the world touches the soul to the quick. Every Christian traveller has more or less experienced these emotions; there are few who have not shed tears at the first sight of Jerusalem. Paula herself was overcome with emotion when, after having climbed the last heights which the Jaffa pilgrim must cross before arriving at the first view of the Holy City, she saw all at once, on the Mount of Olives, the white dome of the church built by St. Helena, and soon after the crenelated walls, domes, and towers of the Sacred City.

Hastening the pace of her mule, she hurriedly traversed the short space which remained; and leaving to the left a monument which was then standing but which is now in ruins—the tomb of a queen of the Adiabenes, a proselyte from the Jewish rite, who had prayed to be interred in sacred soil—she entered by the Jaffa gate (called also the gate of David) into that mysterious city

which bears the three names of Jebus, Salem, and Jerusalem.[1]

The Proconsul of Palestine, who knew her family well, and who had been warned of her arrival, had sent an escort to meet her at the gates of the town, and to conduct her, with all due honours, to the lodging he had prepared for her. But with the same deep feeling of Christian delicacy and humility which made Godfrey de Bouillon in later times refuse to wear a gold crown on the spot where his Saviour had worn a crown of thorns, Paula absolutely refused the palace offered her, and went to lodge, with her suite, in a humble little lodging not far from Calvary.[2] Then, without giving herself a moment to rest after the fatigues of her journey, she rushed off to visit the Holy Places.

It is recorded that a German emperor who was crossing the Coliseum with one of the popes, asked him for some relics; upon which the pope, stooping down, picked up some of the dust in his hand, and, presenting it to the emperor, said, 'See, here are relics. Here, the very dust is holy.' And if this be so, surely the dust of Jerusalem must be considered still more sacred. What part of its soil, which of its monuments or its ruins, is not consecrated by some great remembrance! The mark of the footsteps of Jesus Christ is everywhere. Here His precious blood has flowed and has sanctified the soil for evermore. And thus the pilgrims' veneration for the Holy Places, and especially for those which witnessed the great mysteries of the Redemption, goes back

[1] Ad lævam mausoleo Helenæ derelicto, Adabienorum Reginæ, ingressa est Hierosolymam, urbem trinominem, Jebus, Salem, Jerusalem. *Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Cum proconsul Palestinæ, qui familiam ejus optime noverat, præmissis apparitoribus jussisset parari prætorium, elegit humilem cellulam.—*Ibid.*

to the very first ages of Christianity. Pilgrimages dated from the era of the early martyrs, and have never been interrupted, either by the calamities which fell upon Jerusalem, or by the odious profanations in which the intelligent hatred of Paganism delighted.

Jerusalem, in fact, had gone through terrible vicissitudes since our Saviour's death. Taken and ruined by Titus, after the most terrible siege on record in history, she had been again destroyed by Adrian in consequence of a fresh attempt at revolt. In order to put a stop to any further insubordination on the part of the people, Adrian had dispersed the inhabitants and replaced them by a colony of strangers. Then, with a true instinct that the real cause of the astonishing vitality of this town must be attributed to its religion, he tried to deal a fatal blow to its existence by attacking the two forms of worship of which it was the centre—Judaism and Christianity. With this view, he caused his own statue to be erected in the Temple of Solomon, on the very site of the Holy of Holies. Still more did he profane the tomb of Jesus Christ. Golgotha, which used to be outside the walls, was included in the new city; while Mount Moriah, where the Temple was situated, and Mount Sion, on which was David's palace, were left without the gates to go to rack and ruin. Then Adrian caused the Grotto of the Holy Sepulchre to be filled up, and placed above it a statue of Venus. He then planted a sacred wood, dedicated to Adonis, over the Grotto at Bethlehem; and placed a statue of Jupiter, instead of the Ascension, on the Mount of Olives: vain efforts to resuscitate a dead and corrupt worship which the triumphant Cross had already vanquished! Nevertheless, this profanation lasted 180 years—that is, till the reign of Constantine.[1]

[1] Ab Adriani temporibus usque ad imperium Constantini, per ann

It was this prince, and his pious mother, the Empress Helena, who first restored the Holy Places to their pristine honour. It is touching to read how devoted this first convert among the Cesars was to the tomb of Jesus Christ. A letter from this prince to St. Macarius, Bishop of Jerusalem, written the year which followed the Council of Nice, desires him to build over the Holy Sepulchre (which had at once been freed from the statue of the impure goddess) 'a church, which should be the largest and the most beautiful in the whole world.' Constantine wrote at the same time to the governors of the neighbouring provinces to place everything at the disposal of the Bishop of Jerusalem for this purpose. Then we see, hastening to Jerusalem, in spite of her great age (she was eighty years old), the venerable mother of the emperor, anxious to preside herself over this great work. Ten years were spent in building this church, of which Eusebius has left us a minute description: it was glittering with gold and the rarest marbles. The dedication was made with extreme pomp, in the midst of an extraordinary concourse of people, and in presence of almost all the Oriental bishops, who were assembled at Jerusalem for a Council. St. Helena had a church built also on the Mount of Olives, on the spot where our Lord ascended into heaven; another over the Grotto at Bethlehem, and six more on different sites in the Holy Land. This pious princess had also the joy of finding the True Cross, buried deep in the ground, close to the original place where it had been erected, together

circiter centum octoginta, in loco resurrectionis simulacrum Jovis, in crucis rupe statua ex marmore Veneris a gentibus posita colebatur; Bethlehem augustissimum locum lucus inumbrabat Adonidis, et in specu ubi quondam Christus parvulus vagiit, Veneris amasius plangebatur.—*Epist.* 49, *Ad Paulinam.*

with the nails and the inscription written by Pilate in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin on a wooden tablet; and it was to receive a considerable fragment of this True Cross (which she presented to the Roman Church, with the inscription) that the Basilica was built at Rome of 'Sta. Croce di Gerusalemme,' which exists to this day, and where Paula had often gone to venerate these sacred relics, just as visitors to Rome do at this moment.

The whole Christian world rejoiced at these glorious restorations. Piety towards the Holy Places revived, and pilgrimages were renewed with that ardour and enthusiasm which gave birth a few centuries later to the Crusades; and which, in our days, sends yearly so many thousand pilgrims to pray on the tomb of Jesus Christ. Even at that time, it appears from Paula's own evidence that pilgrims arrived from India and Ethiopia, from Britain and Hibernia, and from all points in the West and East: so that the praises of Christ were sung in every tongue on His tomb.[1]

It was by the Church of the Holy Sepulchre that Paula began her visit to the Holy Places. In spite of the care she had taken on her arrival to come quietly to Jerusalem without exciting any observation, the news of her advent had spread rapidly, and a considerable crowd, anxious to see the noble Roman lady, already filled the Basilica of St. Helena when she came in.

This vast building, according to the description of a contemporary, Eusebius of Cæsarea, contained two sanctuaries—the Church of the Holy Cross and that of the Holy Sepulchre—separated and yet united by an

[1] Vox quidem dissona, sed una religio. Tot pæne psallentium chori, quot gentium diversitates.—*Epist. Paulæ ad Marcellam.* See also an interesting *History of Jerusalem*, by M. Poujoulat, and *La Correspondance d'Orient*, by the same.

atrium occupying the space which was formerly the Garden of Calvary. It thus enclosed the site of the tomb where our Saviour had been laid, and from whence He had risen again: the site where the Cross had been planted, and where our Saviour expired, and the spot where the True Cross had been found.

The Church of the Cross, a great and splendid building, was at the extreme eastern end of the Basilica. One arrived at it by an exterior atrium, surrounded by galleries, 'of which the magnificence,' writes St. Eusebius, 'gave a foretaste of the marvels of the interior.' Three doors gave entrance to a wide nave, formed by two rows of marble columns, which supported a ceiling painted and gilded to represent the sky. The walls were covered with precious marbles. The building ended in a circular apse, supported by twelve columns equally in marble. The roof was covered with sheets of lead. Under the pavement of this church was an equally spacious crypt. It was in the soil of this crypt that the True Cross had been found, and it was there preserved in a beautiful silver case.

To the south of this church was a second colonnade, also surrounded with porticoes, which occupied the space between Golgotha and the Tomb. It was here that the Cross had been planted. This same colonnade also led to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which was smaller than that of the Cross, but equalled it in splendour. The Grotto where the body of the Son of God had been laid occupied the middle of this building. Its walls had been lined with marble. The whole construction was circular, the roof resting on columns of marble, each consisting of one large block. The ceiling was richly decorated with mosaics, representing the Resurrection.

Such was the building raised by the liberality of Constantine and the piety of St. Helena.

Paula went first to the Church of the Cross; but, absorbed by the thought of the great mystery consummated on this spot, she hardly cast her eyes on the beauties of the Basilica. It was the Cross of her Saviour which she sought for with her whole heart. When this sacred object was at last exposed, her faith and love made her fall into a kind of ecstasy. She prostrated herself with her forehead in the dust, adoring the sacred wood, or rather the Christ who hung upon the wood.[1] She could not take her eyes off this solemn sight, which brought before her all the circumstances of the Passion. After this long adoration, she passed through the colonnade to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where her emotion was almost greater.

In these days the pilgrim who enters this sanctuary only sees the place where the Saviour was laid; he does not see the actual stone on which His sacred body rested. This stone has been covered with a marble slab to protect it against the insults of the infidels, and the indiscreet piety of the Christians themselves, each anxious to carry away some portion of it as a relic. But in the fourth century this stone was exposed, as well as that which closed the tomb, and which the angel rolled aside. This was the first thing which caught the eye on entering the Grotto. As soon as Paula perceived it, she rushed forward to kiss it; but when she had penetrated into the actual rock which had received the body of her Saviour, her emotion became uncontrollable, and kneeling down she burst into tears, and pressed her lips on the stone.

[1] Prostrata ante crucem, quasi pendentem Dominum cerneret, adorabat.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

'How many tears she shed on that spot,' writes St. Jerome, 'of which all Jerusalem was witness, Thou alone knowest, O God! at whose divine feet they were laid.' All the Christians present were touched and edified at the fervent piety of this great Roman lady, this daughter of the Scipios,[1] who seemed to forget all, save that she was likewise a daughter of the Cross.

From Calvary, following, only in a contrary sense, the very road which our Saviour had traversed, bearing His Cross, and watering with her tears this Via Dolorosa, Paula arrived at Sion.[2] This Sion, conquered by David from the Jebusites, and so celebrated by him; this city where he had built his palace, and to which he had transported the Ark of the Covenant with such pomp; this citadel, of which he had said, 'Her foundations are upon the holy hills,' presented no other spectacle than one of ruin and desolation. Neither David's nor Herod's magnificent palace remained. Abandoned, outside the new enclosure which Adrian had made, its walls had crumbled into dust, its splendid gates were nothing but a heap of ruins. This sight filled Paula with sorrow and dismay. 'How!' she exclaimed to St. Jerome, quoting the words we have just cited from the Psalms, 'is this the Sion of which David said, "The Lord loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob"?' 'Yes,' replied Jerome; 'but we must here, again, rise from the letter to the spirit. These gates, so precious to the Lord, are not those of which we see the remains;

[1] Ingressa sepulchrum, resurrectionis osculabatur lapidem, quem ab ostio monumenti amoverat angelus. Et ipsum corporis locum in quo Dominus jacuerat, quasi sitiens desideratas aquas, fideli ore lambebat. Quid ibi lacrymarum, quantum gemituum, quid doloris effuderit, testis est cuncta Hierosolyma; testis est ipse Dominus quem rogabat.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Unde egrediens ascendit Sion.—*Ibid.*

they are the mysterious gates which open to admit a multitude of believers in Jesus Christ; they are the doors of the spiritual Sion—that is to say, of the Church. These are the gates against which hell shall never prevail.' [1]

But other remembrances were attached to these spots, and had, as it were, consecrated these ruins. There was the house of Caiphas, where Jesus received the first blow, and where Peter denied his Master. There was the Judgment Hall, where Jesus appeared before Pilate, and was condemned to death. Here, too, was the Column of the Flagellation; a church had been built by St. Helena on this site, where the purest and most sacred blood had been shed. Then there was the less painful remembrance of the Last Supper in the 'upper room, furnished,' where our Lord had instituted that august Sacrament, and where, also, the Blessed Virgin and the Apostles were assembled on the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon them in tongues of fire. 'She would see everything,' writes St. Jerome, 'and one could only drag her from one holy place to lead her to another.' [2]

After having thus visited every part of the ancient city of David, Paula climbed up to Mount Moriah, which a deep ravine separates from the rest of the town, to see the site of the Temple; for of Solomon's original building not a stone remained. St. Jerome does not speak of her impressions on this spot. But he does not omit to record

[1] *Diligit Dominus portas Sion super omnia tabernacula Jacob.* Non eas portas quas hodie cernimus in favillam et cineres dissolutas; sed portas quibus non prævalet infernus, et per quas credentium ad Christum ingreditur multitudo.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Cuncta loca tanto ardore ac studio circumivit, ut nisi ad reliqua festinaret, a primis non posset abduci.—*Ibid.*

a touching detail, where Paula's piety showed itself in a more practical way than by her tears. When she had visited the Holy Places in Jerusalem, she gathered together all the poor and suffering people in the town, and gave them large alms, thus pouring at the feet of Jesus Christ with her prayers and tears the perfume which He loves the best—that of Charity.

CHAPTER XI.

PILGRIMAGES OF ST. PAULA IN THE HOLY LAND.

(386.)

AFTER having visited and venerated all the Holy Places in Jerusalem, our pilgrims decided to traverse the rest of the Holy Land, of which as yet they had only seen the seashore. The plan of the journey which they had drawn up was this: to begin by Bethlehem and the ancient kingdom of Judah, to the south of Jerusalem; then to visit Jericho and the Jordan to the east; and then, retracing their steps, to start afresh for the north, by Samaria and Nazareth, to the Sea of Galilee and Tiberias; and when that was over, to start for their great journey to Egypt. It required some courage to undertake such an expedition in those days; but the emotions of Jerusalem had made Paula and her companions forget their previous fatigues: their ardour and enthusiasm had only increased; so the pious caravan was again organised, and they began their march.

The road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem (the same, probably, which St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin traversed) passes at the foot of Mount Sion, crosses the abrupt valley on that side of the town, and winds over the opposite mountain in a southerly direction. Behind the traveller, to the north, is Jerusalen. To the right the mountains of Judea, which hide the sea; and to the left,

beyond the Dead Sea, the distant mountains of Arabia. Then the pilgrim comes upon the fields of Rama, famous from the words of Jeremiah: 'A voice in Rama was heard, lamentations and great mourning, Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.' The tomb of Rachel is at a little distance to the right of the road. Paula stopped here and silently meditated on the fate of this the beloved spouse of Jacob, dying just after she had given birth to a son whom she wished to call *Benoni*, or the child of sorrow, but whom the patriarch, with a clearer light, named the 'child of my right hand,' '*Benjamin*.'[1] Then she resumed her route, and arrived very soon, by a steep and rough road, at the ancient country of David.

All the Bethlehem hills were formerly covered with wood, and pierced with natural caverns, which served as a shelter for the shepherds and their flocks. It was in one of these that the Blessed Virgin, when turned away from every door, took refuge, and there brought the Saviour of Men into the world. It was to this cradle of the Son of God that the pilgrims first bent their steps.[2] St. Helena, as we have already mentioned, had caused a church to be erected over the Grotto, which still remains, mingling its architecture with the different parts which have been added by other Christian princes. Two staircases opening on each side of the choir of this church lead to the crypt: this is the Grotto of the Nativity. The place is dark, having little or no light from without, but brilliantly illuminated by the lamps

[1] Perrexit Bethlehem et in dexterâ parte itineris stetit ad sepulchrum Rachel, in quo mater Benjamin, non ut vocaverat moriens Benoni, id est filius doloris mei, sed ut pater prophetavit in spiritu, filium dexteræ procreavit.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Inde Bethlehem ingressa, et in specum introiens.—*Ibid.*

which burn continually before the shrine. St. Helena had covered the surface of the rock with marble, as in the Holy Sepulchre. It was at the bottom of this Grotto, on the eastern side, that the Blessed Virgin lay when she brought forth her Divine Son; the crib in which she deposited Him, after having put Him in His swaddling clothes, was in front.[1] At a few steps from the entrance of the Grotto, a star marked the precise spot (which is still shown) where the magi prostrated themselves during their adoration of the Holy Child. St. Paula was profoundly impressed with the great and wonderful mysteries enacted on this spot, and exclaimed to St. Jerome, 'I assure you I seem to see, with my bodily eyes, just as if they were there before me, the Holy Child and His Mother, and their faithful guardian and foster father, Joseph. I seem to see her wrapping Him in swaddling clothes, and to hear the songs of the angels! Here are the shepherds, who have hastened to see the marvel of marvels: the Word, which was from the beginning made flesh!'[2]

In the same way she made to herself a vivid picture of the Adoration of the Magi, the fury of Herod, and the Massacre of the Innocents. Their tomb is at the side, in a grotto which communicates with that of the Nativity by a passage hewn out of the rock. Paula went to look at it; but then again returned to the Grotto of the Holy

[1] The Holy Crib is no longer at Bethlehem. It was carried to Rome, and is in the Church of St. Mary Major; but a block of marble, carved in the shape of a cradle, marks the place.

[2] Me audiente, jurabat cernere se oculis fidei Infantem pannis involutum, vagientem in præsepi Dominum, magos adorantes, stellam fulgentem desuper, matrem virginem, nutritium sedulum, pastores nocte venientes ut viderent Verbum quod factum erat: parvulos interfectos, Herodem sævientem, Joseph et Mariam fugientes in Ægyptum.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

Crib, and giving free vent to her emotion, cried out:[1] 'All hail! O Bethlehem! Thou art, indeed, the "*House of Bread*," for Thou hast given to the earth the bread which came down from heaven. All hail! O Ephrata! Thou art, indeed, a "*fruitful*" land, since the fruit of thy fecundity is God.'[2]

She then recalled to Eustochium and her companions the long series of prophecies, repeated from century to century, regarding the promised Messiah, which were to be accomplished at Bethlehem, from the ancient prophecy of Jacob—'The sceptre shall not be taken away from Judah, nor a ruler, . . . till He come that is to be sent, and He shall be the expectation of nations'—to that celebrated word of the Prophet Micheas: 'And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Judah, but out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be the ruler in Israel; and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity.' Turning to St. Jerome, who was listening to her in silence, she added: 'Ah! now I understand why David was so fond of his dear Bethlehem. He did well to make the vow: "If I shall enter into the tabernacle of my house: if I shall go up into the bed wherein I lie: if I shall give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids, or rest to my temples: until I find out a place for the Lord, a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. Behold, we have heard of it in Ephrata, we have found it in the fields of the wood."' (Psalm cxxxi.) 'And do you remember explaining to me in Rome, when we were reading this passage, that the Hebrew word *zo* signified *him* and not *her*, his mother? Wherefore David added, with prophetic hope: "We will

[1] Mixtisque cum gaudio lacrymis, loquebatur.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] 'House of Bread' is the literal translation of the Hebrew word 'Bethlehem,' while 'Ephrata' means 'fruitful.'

go into His tabernacle; *we will adore in the place where His feet stood.*"' These last words seemed to thrill through Paula's whole soul. She was herself kneeling on that very spot. 'Is it—can it be true,' she exclaimed, 'that I, miserable sinner, have been allowed to press my lips on the crib where the Son of God was born—to pray in the grotto where the Blessed Virgin brought Him forth!'[1] At last, the love of our Lord seeming to take entire possession of her heart, she felt a sudden inspiration to make Bethlehem her future home, and never more to abandon it. And applying to herself the concluding words of the Psalm she had quoted, she added, '*This is my rest for ever and ever; here will I dwell, for I have chosen it.*' She stopped, and, turning to Eustochium, continued, '*And my seed shall serve Him.*'[2]

Such were Paula's holy emotions at Bethlehem, and a Greek priest who recounts them believes that the vivid picture in her mind of the whole scene of the Nativity was a kind of celestial vision vouchsafed to her. Be that as it may, the cry which had escaped her, '*This is my rest for ever!*' was not the result of a passing emotion, but a serious resolution which the mysteries of Bethlehem had called forth, and which was hereafter to bear fruit. We shall see her returning to this spot, and living and dying here with Eustochium. Jerome also was to end his days at Bethlehem, and in succeeding ages the Bethlehem pilgrim will see beyond the Grotto of the Infant Saviour another grotto called that of St. Jerome; and two tombs, one of which contains the bodies of St. Paula

[1] Et ego, misera atque peccatrix, digna sum judicata deosculari præsepe in quo Dominus parvulus vagiit; orare in speluncâ in quâ Virgo puerpera Dominum fudit Infantem!—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Hæc requies mea, quia Domini mei patria est. Hic habitabo, quoniam Salvator elegit eam. Anima mea illi vivet et semen meum serviet ipsi. . . .

and her daughter, and the other that of their spiritual father and friend.

It was necessary, however, to tear themselves away from Bethlehem if they were to continue their pilgrimage through the Holy Land. They were to go first to Hebron —that town and country so full of reminiscences of the history of Israel and its patriarchal life. There every name contains a mystery, every grotto retains the words of a prophet, every hill points to a future: all the poetry, all the pictures of Holy Writ are there. David reigned in Hebron; the Patriarchs lived and pitched their tents there; there, too, they held converse with God Himself, and died and were buried. Their sepulchres and their bones are there to this day.

Paula therefore resumed her journey with joy, but would not leave Bethlehem without visiting one other spot connected with our Saviour's birth. On a hill about a mile from the city is a field called of '*The Flock*,' because it was there that Jacob, after the death of Rachel, came to plant his tent and feed his sheep. It was also on this hill that the shepherds were watching their flocks at the time of our Saviour's birth, and heard the songs of the angels, '*Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.*' St. Helena had built another chapel here, and dedicated it to the Holy Angels. 'See,' exclaimed Paula (thinking of the docility of these good and simple hearts who were the first to worship the Son of God), 'how the shepherds, while guarding their sheep, have found the Lamb of God!' 'This fleece of Gideon,' she added, 'which alone was wet with celestial dew when all the earth around was dry, is it not a prophecy of Him who is called the Lamb of God? And that other lamb, the blood of which was placed by the Hebrews on the lintels of the door-posts of their houses

lest the destroying angel should enter in, is not that again a figure of Him?'[1]

After this little excursion Paula remounted and trotted quickly on the road to Gaza. 'Where are we going?' she asked of St. Jerome, who replied, 'We are going to "the riches and power of God"'—for the word 'Gaza' has both these significations;[2] and at the same time he reminded Paula that it was on this same road to Gaza that, in the time of the Apostles, a great miracle had taken place in the conversion of an Ethiopian whom Philip the Apostle had baptised. Very soon after, our travellers arrived at a place called Bethsur, where a beautiful fountain sprang out of the rock. 'Let us stop here for a moment,' said Jerome. 'It is in the water of this fountain that the Apostle Philip baptised the Ethiopian eunuch of Queen Candace, and spiritually washed his black skin white. This Ethiopian is a figure of the Gentiles.' Paula, leaning on Eustochium, meditated some time on this extraordinary conversion, of which her vivid imagination made a picture at once in her mind's eye. She thought also of the stains which were purified by the waters of baptism, and of the unfortunate race of Ham on whom the malediction still rests, which Jesus Christ alone can remove.

Thus Paula travelled, reading and praying at each spot, with the Bible ever as her guide, while Jerome, full of his future work, let no incident escape him, examined and questioned everybody, and thus added to his immense store of biblical knowledge, which became afterwards so

[1] Dumque servant oves invenerunt Agnum Dei puro et mundissimo vellere, quod in ariditate totius terræ cælesti rore completum est, et cujus sanguis tulit peccata mundi, et exterminatorem Ægypti litus in postibus fugavit.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Statimque citato gradu, cœpit per viam veterem pergere, quæ ducit ad Gazam, ad potentiam vel ad divitias Dei.—*Ibid.*

invaluable to him in his commentaries on Holy Scripture.[1]

From Bethsur our pilgrims came into the fertile valley of Escol, or 'the Grape.' They could not at that season see the wonderful fruit which Joshua's emissaries brought back to the people of Israel; but they could at least admire the beautiful and luxuriant spring vegetation which began to cover the sides of the hills. In spite of the ravages of men, this valley has not ceased to be one of the most fertile in Judæa, even to this day. At last, from Escol, they arrived at the ancient abode of the Patriarchs, the famous valley of Hebron.

This was, after Jerusalem, the spot most revered in the Holy Land. Men flocked to it from Syria, from Idumea, from Arabia, from all the deserts inhabited by the Ishmaelites; from all the countries peopled by the descendants of the Father of the Faithful. Even in these days, the Mahometans have as much respect as the Jews and Christians for this, the cradle of their race and the tomb of their ancestors. It was there, in fact, that Abraham, arriving from Chaldea to the Land of Canaan, came and planted his tent near the oaks of Mamre, in the valley of Hebron. It was there that one evening the Patriarch, seated at the entrance of his tent under one of the oaks, saw three men coming towards him, to whom, as the Book of Genesis recounts, he offered that generous and delicate hospitality so characteristic of those simple patriarchal days: in recompense for which these three men, who were angels in disguise, promised him that Sarah, who was nearly a hundred years old, should

[1] Nobis curæ fuit cum eruditissimis Hebræorum hunc laborem subire ut circumiremus provinciam quam universæ ecclesiæ Christi sonant.—*Præfatio in libros Paralipomenon.* Cf. *Præfatio Commentariorum in Nahum.*

bring forth a son in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. St. Jerome mentions that Paula saw the remains of the venerable old oak, which still existed where this scene took place, and where Abraham, according to the expression of St. John, '*rejoiced that he might see the day of Christ: and he saw it, and was glad.*'[1] At the other extremity of the valley of Hebron (still called the City of Four Men, *Cariath Arbé*, because it contained, as was supposed, with the tombs of the three Patriarchs, that of the father of the human race) Paula was taken to see that famous cave where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob rest with their three wives, Sarah, Rebecca, and Leah. Jacob died in Egypt, but he made Joseph swear to bring him back and bury him with his fathers. Joseph came from Egypt with all the principal officers of Pharaoh's household and a multitude of horsemen to bring Jacob's bones back to Hebron. When Paula visited the cave, a Christian church covered it; now, alas! this church has been converted into a mosque, from which Christian pilgrims are rigorously excluded by Mussulman fanaticism.

Close to Hebron, on the side of a steep hill, was an old town called *Cariath Sepher*, or the 'Town of Men of Letters.' Jerome asked Paula if she would go and see it. 'No,' replied Paula, laughing, and alluding to Jerome's method of interpreting Holy Writ; 'what have I got to say to the letter which kills when I have found the spirit which vivifies?' But she went instead to see the tanks of Othoniel, and admired those wonderful works of irrigation which converted all that arid country into fertile plains. All this had only occupied one day. As there are but two hours' march from Jerusalem to

[1] Intravit Saræ cellulas, videns incunabula Isaac, et vestigia quercûs Abraham, sub quâ vidit diem Christi et lætatus est.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

Bethlehem, and five from Bethlehem to Hebron, the next morning was devoted to visiting that famous hill called *Caphar-Barucha*, to which spot Abraham had accompanied the angels, and where he had had that wonderful conversation, related in the Book of Genesis, when he pleaded for the salvation of Sodom, and would have had his petition granted if ten righteous men had been found there, which there were not: 'And Abraham got up early in the morning. . . . And he looked towards Sodom and Gomorrah, and the whole land of that country: and he saw the ashes rise up from the earth as the smoke of a furnace.'[1]

From this spot we have one of the finest views in Judæa. Our pilgrims, having left Hebron early, arrived when the sun had already risen, and its rays lit up the fine arid rocks of St. Saba and Engaddi and the distant line of the Dead Sea, while a group of small hills, rounded, as the Psalmist writes, like lambs in a plain,[2] among which was the hill of Segor, filled up the middle distance; and the foreground was studded with flowering vines and fig-trees. After this excursion, the pilgrims came back to Jerusalem across the fields of Thecua, the country of the shepherd prophet Amos; but they did not linger long, and soon resumed their route towards Jericho and the Jordan. On their way they were to pass by the Mount of Olives and the village of Bethany. What varied emotions would not those spots call forth!

Issuing again from the Holy City by the eastern or Golden Gate, through which our Saviour made His triumphal entry, and likewise passed after His Last Supper on His way to the Grotto of Gethsemane, the pious caravan crossed the Valley of Jehoshaphat and the

[1] Genesis xix. 27, 28, &c.

[2] Montes exultastis sicut arietes, et colles sicut agni ovium.—Ps. cxiii.

brook Cedron, and, climbing up the hill, went to the Garden of the Agony. Paula prayed there long and fervently, kneeling on the stone which had received the bloody sweat of the Son of God. But her sorrow was succeeded by a feeling of joy, and even triumph, when, on looking up, she perceived, glistening in the sun, on the Mount of Olives, that Cross once ignominiously planted on Calvary,[1] and now surmounting the Church of the Ascension, built by the Empress Helena on the very spot from whence our Saviour ascended into heaven. The pilgrims remarked that the dome of the church was open, and Jerome explained to them the reason, by telling them the tradition (which dates from the earliest ages of Christianity) that no architect had ever been able to arrive at closing up the glorious path of Jesus Christ. It is close to the ruins of that church that the pilgrim still sees on the rock the ineffaceable print left by the Saviour's foot before leaving the earth.

The convent of Melania and the monastery of Rufinus were at a short distance from the Church of the Ascension. Paula and Jerome were eagerly expected, and hastened thither themselves. What must not have passed in that interview between these two illustrious women whom a similar attraction had brought from Rome to the Holy Places, the example of the one having sufficed to lead the other to follow her! And what a meeting likewise must that have been between Jerome and Rufinus, those old and tried friends, who had not seen each other for so many years, and who found themselves together so unexpectedly and in so wonderful a spot! Unfortunately history is mute on this subject. When

[1] Per Thecuam atque Amos rutilantem Montis Oliveti crucem aspiciam, de quo Salvator ascendit ad Patrem.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

Jerome, Paula's biographer, wrote the pages from which our narrative is drawn, the times were changed: this friendship, so full of sweetness and known by the whole Church, had given place to a melancholy estrangement. The recollections of those happy days, when the storm came, were too bitter for Jerome: he has buried them in silence.

Let us go back to the journey to Jericho. Not far from the convent of Melania, the pilgrims traversed the little hamlet of Bethphage, where the ass was found which carried our Lord in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. On the other side of the Mount of Olives, on the sloping ground leading to the Dead Sea and Jordan, the road passed by another village, Bethany, where our Saviour liked to retire with His disciples, in a little house occupied by a brother and two sisters, who were his friends. Paula was touched on entering this house where Jesus had so often been hospitably received, where Martha had served Him, and Mary had sat at His feet and heard His divine words; and from thence she likewise visited the tomb of Lazarus.[1]

From Bethany to Jericho the road rises and falls from one hill-top to another — a road which our Saviour and His Apostles often trod, though it is neither safe nor pleasant. They passed by a spot called *Adomin* (or Bloody), on account of the many murders there committed. In fact, no one to this hour can traverse this road safely without an escort. It was there that our Saviour placed His parable of the wounded traveller and the good Samaritan. Paula, under this figure of a good Samaritan, adored the

[1] Ingressa sepulcrum Lazari, Mariæ et Marthæ vidit hospitium.— *Epitaph. Paulæ.*

Saviour Himself.[1] These pious thoughts, with which her mind was continually occupied, prevented her feeling the fatigue. She rode on with extraordinary courage across these ravines, the road at one moment sunk in a deep gorge, at another mounting up a steep precipice. Here and there through the clefts of the mountains appeared the distant waters of the Red Sea. When Paula arrived at the last heights which border the valley of Jericho and the Lake Asphaltites, a solemn and imposing sight presented itself. Around her were deserts, arid rocks, and wild ridges; at her feet a deep valley opening out between two long chains of parallel mountains, which lose themselves in the desert beyond; in the middle of the valley the Jordan rolls its discoloured waters towards the lake, deeply buried between two walls of mountains. Such was the view unrolled before Paula's eyes of a spot which had alternately attracted the blessings and curses of Heaven. A rapid descent led from hence to Jericho. At the bottom of the hill, in a part of the road which led across the plain to the old Canaanite city, three things attracted the attention of the pilgrims. At the foot of a little hillock was a limpid and abundant spring, shaded by palm-trees and aromatic plants. This was the fountain of Elisha, the bitter waters of which had formerly been sweetened by the prophet. A little further on is the sycamore tree upon which Zacheus is said to have climbed to see our Saviour pass; and finally, close to the town, the spot where our Lord met the two blind men whom He cured. Night fell; amidst its lengthening shadows Paula sought for the walls which were thrown down at the presence of the ark, and of which Joshua in

[1] Recto itinere descendebat Jericho, recogitans illum de Evangelio vulneratum, ad clementiam Samaritæ, id est Custodis.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

vain forbade the rebuilding. But many times since that era had they been destroyed in the vicissitudes of war; and of the ancient city of Jericho scarcely anything but a miserable village remained.

Before daybreak the next morning, in order to avoid the heat, Paula and her companions started for the Jordan. It is a two hours' march from Jericho, across an arid and burning plain. Half a league from Jericho they came to Galgala, a spot famous in Bible history. This was the first halting-place of the Hebrews in the Promised Land after they had crossed the river. It was there that Joshua, with twelve stones taken from the Jordan (to represent the twelve tribes, and a figure of the twelve apostles), raised an imperishable monument of their miraculous passage; there, again, he ordered a circumcision of the people before they had advanced another step in the Promised Land—a type of that spiritual circumcision needful before entering our heavenly inheritance; and, lastly, it was there that manna ceased to fall, and that the Hebrews once more ate the fruits of the earth. But the sun was rising on the Arabian mountains, and the waters sparkled and glistened in the glowing light, when the caravan arrived on its banks. There, under the feet of the priests bearing the ark, the stream had dried up and given a free passage to the people of Israel; there, again, at the voice of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, the course of the river had been arrested, and they had crossed as on dry land. These waters had cured Naaman of his leprosy—a type of guilty humanity; but, above all, they had flowed in baptism on the head of the Son of God. 'And see! what a marvel,' exclaimed Paula, 'that this very element of water, which formerly drowned the whole human

race in the deluge, now purified by the contact of the Son of God, regenerates us in baptism.'[1]

Judea having thus been explored from south to east, it only remained for the pilgrims to see the ancient kingdom of Israel: Samaria, Galilee, Nazareth, the Lake of Tiberias, Capernaum—all those sights so deeply interesting to Christians as the theatre of the principal miracles of Jesus Christ. St. Jerome hastens his description of this part of their pilgrimage; but still we can trace Paula step by step. By the valley of Achor the pilgrims rejoined at Bethel the road which went from Jerusalem to Galilee, passing by Sichem, Shiloh, and Sebaste, the ancient Samaria, and traversing the plain of Esdraelon—spots which are still teeming with great biblical recollections.

At Bethel, Jacob, flying from the wrath of Esau, had slept on the bare ground, his head resting on a stone, and during his sleep he had seen in a dream that mysterious ladder stretching from earth to heaven by which the angels ascended and descended. And on waking he exclaimed, 'This is no other than the house of God (Beth-el): this is the gate of heaven.' Jerome and Paula talked long and earnestly on this subject, Jerome affirming that this stone was a type of the corner-stone spoken of by Isaiah—that is to say, Christ; while the going to and fro of the angels represented the mysterious breathing of God's grace, lifting up

[1] Vix nox transierat, ferventissimo æstu venit ad Jordanem. Stetit in ripâ fluminis, et, orto sole, solis justitiæ recordata est; quomodo in medio amnis alveo sicca sacerdotes posuerint vestigia; et ad Eliæ Elisæique imperium, stantibus ex utraque parte aquis, iter unda præbuerit, pollutasque diluvio aquas et totius humani generis interfectione maculatas, suo Dominus mundaverit baptismate.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

those who were striving to rise, and helping onward the faint-hearted.[1]

From Bethlehem to Shiloh the road runs towards the north parallel to the arid mountains of Ephraim. On these hills are the tombs of Joshua and Eleazar, son of Aaron. Of Shiloh nothing remains save the ruins of the ancient altar where the ark formerly rested, and where three times a year the Israelites came to worship. There also two hundred Benjamites—the remains of that unhappy tribe who had been well nigh exterminated for the crime of the men of Gabaa—had carried off the daughters of Shiloh in the midst of a feast, to make them their wives; an example followed by Romulus in the rape of the Sabines.[2]

Paula's interest was, however, redoubled when, in the midst of the valley which separates the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim, she first discovered Sichem, and drew near to that venerable Jacob's well where our Saviour, thirsty and tired, had sat and discoursed with the Samaritan in those beautiful words recorded by Holy Writ. This well, deeply sunk in the rock, was at that time enclosed in a church which had been built over it, and where Paula, entering and kneeling with her companions, meditated for a long while on the wonderful conversion of the Samaritan, and on that marvellous water which springeth up, according to our Saviour's words, to everlasting life.

They next visited, on the flanks of Mount Gerizim,

[1] Longum est si velim dicere de Bethel, domo Dei, in quâ super nudam humum dormivit Jacob, et posito subter caput lapide qui in Isaiâ lapis dicitur angularis, vidit scalam ad cœlum tendentem, in quâ Dominus desuper innitebatur, ascendentibus porrigens manum, et negligentes de sublime præcipitans.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Quid narrem Silo, in quâ altare dirutum hodieque monstratur, et raptum Sabinarum a Romulo tribus Benjamitica præcucurrit?—*Ibid.*

the tombs of the twelve Patriarchs, the sons of Jacob, and the fathers of the twelve tribes; then, climbing the ascent, they entered the ancient town of Samaria, which Herod, to flatter Augustus, had called Sebaste,[1] and which he had embellished with splendid monuments, of which the modern traveller still admires the columns. But the Herods had long since ceased to reign at Sebaste. He who had become its real king was their victim, St. John the Baptist. The tomb of the precursor, though recently rifled by Julian the Apostate and emptied of its holy relics, was venerated far and wide. Paula was moved to tears at seeing the multitude of sick and possessed persons who flocked there to be delivered from their infirmities.[2] From the tomb of St. John the Baptist she went on to that of Elisha; and then, though weak and tired, she still insisted on climbing up the mountain on foot to see the cave where the prophet Obadiah had hidden a hundred prophets and fed them on bread and water to hide them from the fury of Ahab and Jezebel. At last, leaving the steep mountain path and turning to the right, the caravan came into the vast plain of Esdraelon, which unites Samaria to Galilee, and stretches from the foot of Mount Gilboah to the heights surrounding Nazareth—that famous plain where warriors of all nations have pitched their tents, and which evokes the memory of the most famous scenes in Jewish history. But Paula would not linger there, but hastened to a spot dearer to her heart, Nazareth, 'the nursery of the Son of God,' as St. Jerome called it,[3] the humble little town where Jesus Christ lived for thirty years, in a tiny house abutting on

[1] Sebaste in Greek signifies Augustus.

[2] Miserebatur omnium, et per singulos lacrymis effusis, Christi clementiam deprecabatur.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[3] Inde cito itinere percucurrit Nazareth, nutriculam Domini.—*Ibid.*

a rock, which the mother of Constantine had enclosed in a magnificent basilica.

An old historian, Godfrey de Beaulieu, thus records the entry of St. Louis into Nazareth: 'On the eve of the Annunciation, the king, clothed in a hair shirt, directed his steps towards Nazareth. When he perceived it at a distance he got off his horse, and after having knelt advanced on foot to the Holy City. He fasted that day on bread and water, although he had a most fatiguing march. Since the Son of God became incarnate, never had Nazareth seen a greater or more touching devotion.'

After having venerated the Holy House, our Lady's Fountain (where she must have gone so often to draw water), and all the other spots so full of interest to Christians in every age, Paula proceeded to visit the neighbourhood which witnessed so many of our blessed Lord's miracles. She saw Cana and Capernaum; and, getting into a boat, crossed the Lake of Tiberias, visited Bethsaida and the other towns on its banks (now reduced to a few miserable huts), and, returning towards Nazareth, stopped at the desert where our Saviour fed five thousand people with the five loaves and two fishes, and the mountain where He so often retired to pray, ending with the ascent of Mount Thabor.

Even had Thabor not been consecrated for ever by the recollection of the Son of God and His transfiguration, it would still be a 'mountain of mountains,' for the beauty of its form and the magnificence of the views to be seen from it on every side. It rises like a rounded pyramid—a solitary mountain in the midst of the vast plain of Esdraelon. Paula climbed up to its summit, and paused at the spot where our Lord was transfigured, and where the disciples had exclaimed in their delight,

'Master, it is good for us to be here!' Here she knelt and prayed a long while, and then rose to the contemplation of one of the most beautiful panoramas in the world. On one side Hermon and Gilboa, the picturesque groups of Sulem and Endor, with the distant mountains of Judah and Ephraim; on the other the beautiful lines of Carmel jutting out into the sea. To the north, beyond the plains of Galilee, the high snow-tipped heights of the Anti-Lebanon range and the great Hermon; towards the east, the deserts of Hauran, the Lake of Tiberias, the valley of the Jordan, and the high lands of Gilead. The plain of Esdraelon forms the centre of the picture covered with scattered villages, all famous in Holy Writ, and divided by the torrent Kishon, which meanders through it till it empties itself into the sea. All this, seen under a glowing Eastern sun, seems to point to Thabor as the fittest spot for the transfiguration of the Son of Man—that glorious reflection of His divinity on His humanity, and the type of the future transfiguration of our souls in God.

Coming down from Thabor, Paula went to Nain, where our Lord had resuscitated the widow's son and given him back to his mother. Here St. Jerome remarks: 'The day would close before my tale was ended were I to enumerate half the spots visited by the venerable Paula, with an incredible ardour of faith and love.'[1] Soon after, she left Nazareth, and returned by the same route to Jerusalem.

[1] Dies me priusquam sermo deficeret, si voluero cuncta percurrere, quæ Paula venerabilis fide incredibile pervagata est.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

CHAPTER XII.

PAULA'S JOURNEY INTO EGYPT.

(386.)

HER pilgrimage ended, and filled with that deep interior peace which she had felt ever since her departure from Rome, Paula would fain have settled herself at once at Bethlehem, where she had made up her mind to live in future. But Egypt called her—Egypt, with its wonderful schools of biblical knowledge (more flourishing than ever under a celebrated master at Alexandria), and still more with its marvellous solitaries, of whom St. Epiphanius and St. Jerome had already given her such thrilling descriptions. The rest of the caravan shared her impatience, so that they quickly started on their long and laborious march. It took sixteen days to go from Jerusalem to Alexandria.[1]

Their first halt was at the ancient capital of the Philistines, Gaza; passing by Succoth, where Paula drank at Samson's fountain (which sprang from that famous jaw-bone), and by Morasthim, where they stopped for a few seconds at the tomb of the prophet Micah, which had been transformed into a church. From Gaza, leaving the country of Idumea to the left,[2] they crossed

[1] Tillemont, tome xii. p. 105.

[2] Transibo ad Ægyptum, . . . et ex latere derelinquam Idumæam, et per arenas mollissimas, pergentium vestigia subtrahentes, veniam ad Ægypti fluvium *Sior*, qui interpretatur *turbidus*.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

the shifting sands till they reached the eastern branch of the Nile, which the Hebrews called '*Sior*,' that is, muddy. Pelusium had nothing to tempt them; so, passing by Gessen, where Joseph established his brethren, and the Fields of Tanis, where God worked such miracles by the hands of Moses, they crossed successively the different branches of the Nile, and arrived at last safely at the first object of their pilgrimage, the ancient *Nô* of the Sacred Books, then become the celebrated city of Alexandria.

This town deserved a long stay, not only on account of the splendour of its monuments, both Greek and Roman, its famous temple of Serapis, and the endless recollections of Alexander, Pompey, Cæsar, and Cleopatra, but also from its schools and the active intellectual movement of which it was the centre. It was then the Athens of the East. Alexandria possessed a host of poets, grammarians, philosophers, astronomers, and learned men of all kinds. Greek and Jewish letters struggled for the mastery; and it was to the Alexandrian Jews that was due the first Greek version of the holy books called the Septuagint, composed three centuries before Jesus Christ. Christianity could not fail to throw a still greater lustre on this intellectual movement, and nowhere in the history of the Church had the alliance between science and faith been more striking. Famous from its teachers, among whom it reckoned St. Clement and the great Origen, this school had at that moment a noted doctor at its head, whose lessons were eagerly sought by Paula and Eustochium as well as by St. Jerome. This detained them at Alexandria far longer than the profane marvels of the town would have done.

A princely hospitality, besides, awaited them. The young Bishop Theophilus, recently raised to the patri-

archal chair, and whom we shall find, later on, taking a considerable part in events of great importance to Jerome and Paula, knew Jerome already by name, and desired the priest whose duty it was to look after strangers in the *Xenodochium*, or hospital, in Alexandria, to take special care of these illustrious guests. This priest was the famous monk Isidore, who had accompanied St. Athanasius to Rome, and had blessed Marcella when she was still a little child; he had also made Paula's acquaintance there, for he returned to Rome a second time with one of the successors of St. Athanasius; and a cotemporary historian, Palladius, tells us how he was liked and appreciated in that noble Roman society.[1] It was as useful as it was pleasant for our pilgrims to find their old guest on the Aventine thus established in Alexandria.

The learned Christian master whose reputation filled all Egypt and the East was the illustrious Didymus, a blind man. This misfortune, which had happened to him in his childhood, and even before he had finished learning his letters, had not prevented his educating himself; and his knowledge was something prodigious. Endowed with an heroic will and a wonderful memory, he had learnt all profane sciences: grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, geometry, and philosophy: but all these sciences were but as auxiliaries to the great theological and exegetical studies to which his whole life was devoted. He knew the Holy Scriptures by heart, and no one equalled him in his talent for their interpretation. A passionate admirer of the genius and works of Origen, he may have partaken, in some degree, of his errors; yet in the struggle with Arianism he had fought valiantly with St. Athanasius for the consubstantiality of the

[1] *Historia Lausiaca de Sancto Isidoro.*

Word. Every one knows that the great St. Anthony came to Alexandria from the depths of his desert to see and hear him, and that he exclaimed with delight, 'O Didymus! do not complain of being blind. You are deprived, it is true, of those eyes of the flesh which we possess in common with the serpents and the moles; but you have those eyes of the soul which you enjoy with the angels, and with which one sees God.' Jerome said, in the same way, 'that no one was so clear-sighted as this blind sage; that his sight soared above the earth; and that he had those eyes which Holy Scripture praises in the Spouse of the Canticles, and which our Saviour commands us to use, by looking upwards and seeing whether the fields were white, and the ears of corn ripe for the harvest.'[1]

No sooner, therefore, was Jerome arrived at Alexandria, than he hastened to find this blind philosopher, and was not ashamed, in spite of his white hairs, to become the scholar of such a master.[2] Paula and Eustochium accompanied him.[3] Didymus, enchanted with his new disciples, hastened to put himself at their disposal, and daily conferences took place on Holy Scriptures between him and his visitors. Jerome had prepared notes of the principal difficulties which he had met with, and proposed their solution to Didymus.[4] A whole month passed in these learned discussions, and

[1] Didymus meus oculum habens Sponsæ de Cantico Canticorum, et illa lumina quæ in candentes segetes sublimari Jesus præcepit, . . . ut videns vocetur propheta.—*Præfatio in librum Didymi de Spiritu Sancto.*

[2] Jam canis spargebatur caput, et magistrum potius quam discipulum decebat. Perrexi tamen Alexandriam, ut viderem Didymum.—*Epist. ad Pammachium.*

[3] Bollandist's *Lives*: 'Life of St. Jerome,' p. 387.

[4] Ut ab eo in Scripturis omnibus quæ habebam dubia sciscitarer.—*Præfatio Comment. in Epist. ad Ephesios.*

at Jerome's entreaty Didymus wrote his Commentaries on the Prophecies of Osee and Zacharias, and thus filled up the gap left in Origen's works.[1] These days remained for ever engraved in Jerome's memory as in Paula's, and later on, at Bethlehem, Jerome gloried in reckoning the learned Alexandrian among his masters.[2]

But these interesting studies could not make Paula forget the main object of her visit to Egypt—namely, her intense desire to see with her own eyes those wonderful ascetics who, from the bosom of a sensual society and a voluptuous age, had voluntarily exiled themselves from their homes and families to bury themselves in the desert and astonish the world by lives of incredible austerity, consecrated entirely to the concerns of a future life.

More than a century had elapsed since the Spirit of God had driven the first anchorites into the desert. And this inspiration had been so powerful that at the time of which we are writing, by the testimony of Rufinus, who had lately visited those places, there were nearly as many inhabitants in the deserts of Egypt as in the towns, so fully did the monastic idea meet the wants of the times and of human souls. The impulse given by Christianity to thoughts above this world, together with the disgust which men of noble minds felt for the corruptions of civilisation and the degradation to which excess of luxury had brought society, attracted crowds to this sublime life, which, although ideal, was not a chimera, as its realisation was seen on every side. Egypt, with its two chains of parallel mountains which bordered the Nile, and the complete solitude of these mountains, was more fitted than any other country for

[1] *Præfatio Comment. in Osee.* [2] Rufinus, *Invectiv.* lib. ii.

the inauguration of this kind of life. In fact, the desert on both sides of the stream soon became peopled, in the east, towards the Red Sea and Sinai; in the west, towards the oasis of Libya.

At the time when Paula visited these solitudes monastic life was in its fullest development and activity. The great anchorites, Paul, Antony, Hilarion, and Pachomius, were dead; but their disciples remained, who rivalled them in sanctity: Macarius, Arsenius, Serapion, and the rest. The work of these ascetics had been lately more completely organized. The first who came to the desert lived alone in grottos or cells, each according to his own individual fancy or inspiration. Paul, for instance, had lived for sixty years in a cave, at the entrance of which was a fountain and a palm-tree; so that he drank the water of the spring and lived on the fruits of the tree. Antony lived a still more extraordinary life. But when the number of the solitaries increased they felt the need of uniting themselves, and the cenobitic life in common was substituted for that of the anchorites, or, rather, the solitaries then became of two sorts—those who continued living alone and those who lived in community. Great monasteries rose up on the borders of the Nile down to the frontiers of Egypt. Amidst the most remarkable of these monastic establishments were those hidden in the deserts of the Libyan mountains to the west of the Nile. The Libyan chain divides into two branches, between which a large valley opens out, famous for its nitrous lakes, and which appears to be a dried-up branch of the Nile, its name signifying '*a river without water*.' It was on the eastern branch of this Libyan chain, and the nearest to Alexandria, that a mountain rose up called the Mountain of Nitria, at about an equal distance from that city and

Memphis. It was inhabited by 5,000 cenobites, divided among fifty different monasteries, but all placed under the direction of the same abbot. Not far from this was another spot, called the Desert of Caves, inhabited entirely by anchorites to the number of 600. Finally, nearer the Nile, and beyond the Nitrian valley, was another wilder and more savage desert, that of Scété, which equally contained a numerous body of ascetics. It was this portion of the monastic establishments which Paula undertook to visit, as Melania had done some years before.

We may judge of the fatigue and perils of such a journey by the description which Rufinus has given us of the dangers which Melania and her escort ran when he accompanied them on a similar expedition. On Lake Maréotis, which was subject to gales from the sea, they encountered a terrible tempest. Soon after they were pursued and nearly taken prisoners by a hostile tribe of Arabs. Certain portions of the ground were marshy, from the inundations of the Nile, and most difficult to cross without sinking in. In the Nitrian valley the crocodiles sleeping on the borders of the lake, suddenly roused by their footsteps, had turned ferociously on them to attack them. In passing from Nitria to Scété, they lost their way, and wandered about for five days and nights in the desert, where they nearly perished of hunger and thirst. Another day the deep bogs in the waterless tracks they were crossing again led them into great dangers; and, finally, when descending the Nile their boat had gone to pieces.

It required, then, some courage, after such a description, to face this journey. To reach the mountains of Nitria, which was their first point on leaving Alexandria, the pilgrims had forty miles (or twelve leagues) of bad

and dangerous road to cross. Nevertheless the caravan started, and arrived there in safety. But the news of Paula's visit had preceded her, and the Bishop of Heliopolis, under whose pastoral care the Nitrian convents had been placed, hastened to meet his noble guest, and introduce her to the large colony of cenobites and anchorites, which was the object of her expedition. As soon as the caravan reached the foot of the mountain the monks came down in procession, chaunting hymns and litanies. Paula soon found herself surrounded by these eminent solitaries, and felt herself utterly unworthy of so great an honour, but at the same time gave thanks to God, who had thus made the 'desert to flourish as a rose-garden.'[1] The bishop first conducted his pious guests to the church on the top of the mountain, and then, with that cordial and simple hospitality which still distinguishes the Eastern solitaries, he installed them in a building outside the convent set apart for strangers, where they brought water and linen cloths to wash and wipe their feet, and then bread and fruit to refresh them; after which Paula was allowed to visit the monastery. The superhuman lives led by these men filled her with such reverent admiration that she was not content without kneeling before them and kissing their feet as the living representatives of our Lord Jesus Christ upon earth.[2] She listened eagerly to their histories, and enquired into every detail of their daily lives.

[1] . . . . Oppidum Domini Nitriam, in quo purissimo virtutum nitro sordes lavantur quotidie plurimorum. Quod cum vidisset, occurrente sibi venerabili episcopo Isidoro, et turbis innumerabilibus monachorum, lætabatur quidem ad gloriam Domini, sed se indignam tanto honore fatebatur.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Per singulos sanctos Christum se videre credebat et quidquid in illos contulerat, in Dominum se contulisse lætabatur.—*Ibid.*

These lives were simple and free, although so holy and austere; anxious to reduce the flesh to submission to the spirit, and to penetrate the secret of divine things, they united action to contemplation. Their days were divided between work and prayer. They tilled the ground, cut down and planted trees, fished in the Nile, milked their goats, and wove the matting on which they slept and were to die. Others were absorbed in the study of Holy Scripture. These monasteries were, in fact, like a bee-hive: 'Every one had in his hand the wax of work, and in his mouth the honey of psalms and prayers.'[1]

After having thus seen the cenobites of Nitria, Paula left them to visit the anchorites in the desert. Here were no walls built by the hands of man; caverns and rocks were their dwelling-places; the earth was their table; roots and wild plants their food; the water which flowed from the fissures of the rocks their only beverage. Their prayers were continual, and from all the cavities of the mountain resounded the praises of God. The caves had no communication with each other. Once a week only, on the Sunday, the anchorites left their caves and came, clothed in palm-leaves or sheep-skins, to join their cenobite brothers in the church at Nitria. Paula visited one after the other of these ascetics, and conversed with them on the things of God.[2]

But the most remarkable among these solitaries, the '*columns of the desert*,' as St. Jerome called them, were then at Scété.[3] A day and a night of fatiguing march

[1] M. de Montalembert, *Les Moines d'Occident*, tome i. p. 70.

[2] Cujus non intravit cellulam? Quorum pedibus non advoluta est? —*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[3] Quid memorem Macarios, Arsenios, Serapionas, et reliqua columnarum Christi nomina?—*Ibid.* We may conjecture that St. Jerome here spoke of St. Arsenius, deacon of the Roman Church and tutor of

across the Libyan range of mountains and the valley of nitrous lakes, led the caravan from the cells of Nitria to the wild and horrible solitudes of Scété. No track pointed out the road: the stars were their only guide: and if the way were lost they would perish miserably. The soil besides was encrusted with stalactites of salt, which crunched under their feet, but the sharp points of which pierced through both the hoofs of beasts and the shoes of men. But 'Paula's ardour was incredible,' exclaims St. Jerome,[1] and in her enthusiasm and anxiety to see St. Macarius and his companions she seemed insensible to fatigue.

Macarius was a disciple of St. Antony and St. Pachomius, and so austere that he astonished St. Pachomius himself, when, quite young, he put himself under the discipline of that great ascetic at Tabenna. Pachomius watched him, during an entire Lent, weaving mats in his cave, without speaking to a human being, entirely absorbed in God, and eating only once a week (Sunday) some leaves of raw vegetables. No one at Scété surpassed Macarius. He permitted the pilgrims to come to his cave, and Paula threw herself at his feet, which the solitary, in his contempt for all human honours, did not attempt to prevent. When she rose and asked him questions on their mode of life, &c., Macarius answered her with great simplicity, introduced her to the principal

Theodosius' children, who exchanged the palace of Constantinople for the desert of Scété; and Rufinus, in the admirable *Life* he has left us of this great solitary, mentions a visit of a 'noble Roman lady' to the ascetic, and the strange way in which she was received. 'You have come all this way to see me!' he exclaimed. 'Well, then, look at me. But why did you teach others the way to my solitude?' The lady implored him to remember her before the throne of God. 'Yes,' replied the ascetic, 'I will pray to God that He may efface you from my memory!' Rufinus does not name the lady; but could it be Paula?

[1] Mirus ardor et vix in feminâ credibilis fortitudo.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

ascetics of Scété, and delighted her by his descriptions of their heroic sanctity and perfection. The following is an instance. A traveller had offered Macarius a beautiful bunch of fresh grapes. Macarius, though tormented with hunger and thirst, passed it on to a brother, and this one to the next, and so on, till the tempting bunch had been the round of all the cells and come back untouched into Macarius' hands, who blessed God for the mortification of his disciples. Paula exclaimed to St. Jerome, 'No, these are not mortal men, but angels whom we see around us!' Jerome was equally filled with admiration; yet he fancied he perceived that, in point of doctrine, the theories of Origen had imperceptibly worked their way into the caves of these ascetics —theories which, hereafter, were to cause much trouble in the desert as also at Bethlehem.

After this journey to Scété, Paula's anxiety to visit the monastic orders under all their different forms had been well-nigh satisfied. But she had still to see the monks of Pachomius, who were living under more defined rules than those of Nitria, which rules became the germ of the constitutions compiled at a later period by the founders of the great religious orders. To arrive there it was necessary to go up the Nile again as far as Arsinoë, or to cross the western chain of the Libyan mountains. Paula chose the latter. At some distance from the monastery our pilgrims met some strange-looking workmen, clothed in coarse tunics, with hoods over their heads and goat-skin cloaks, who were reaping the corn, gathering palm-leaves, or digging in the ground without uttering a word: these were the monks of Arsinoë. There were upwards of 10,000 in these solitudes, governed by an ascetic named Serapion, whose renown for sanctity was spread far and wide.

Hospitality was the rule of this monastery as in that of Nitria: and the *Xenodochium* hastened to receive Paula and her suite, whom Serapion subsequently conducted all over his monastery. Its government was as follows. At its head, a superior general, the father of the institute—in a word, the *abbot*; the monks divided into families, each occupied in the same labours, with a superior over every ten; and a procurator, to whom was entrusted the care of all the food of the monastery, to distribute it to the superiors over each group, and, in his turn, to receive the fruit of their labours and to give a monthly account of it to the abbot. Thanks to the frugal and austere lives led by the community, the monastery had been able to send assistance to others in need; and very often, Rufinus relates, they sent vessels laden with corn to Alexandria, and even into Libya, in seasons of famine.[1]

Having, then, nothing to do but to think of his own soul, each cenobite worked silently, from break of day, at his appointed task, his mind absorbed in holy thoughts. At one the work was interrupted: psalms were sung, the Holy Scriptures read, and then the abbot, or father, as he was called, gave them a spiritual conference. 'And whilst he spoke,' writes St. Jerome, 'tears often flowed down the cheeks of the monks; and when he dwelt on the joys of heaven, on the kingdom of Jesus Christ and eternal bliss, these men, who were living continually in the presence and with the thought of God, would lift up their eyes to heaven with an expression which seemed to say, "*Oh! who will give us the wings of a dove that we might fly away to the place of Eternal Rest!*"' The conference over, every one went, with the superior of each group, to the refectory, where, with eyes bent down and faces

[1] *Life of St. Serapion.*

hidden by their hoods, they ate in silence the one meal of the day, which consisted of bread and vegetables seasoned with salt. Fasting and abstinence were the rule throughout the year, excepting during Lent, when they were even more strict. Only during Pentecost, when it is the Church's rule not to fast, the evening's meal was changed to the morning, so as to conform to the general custom; without, however, breaking the rule of abstinence.

Wine was only allowed to old men and children—for even the latter were admitted into Pachomius' monastery—and they were allowed to take something in the morning and have their vegetables cooked.

After the meal and the prayers, the brothers might talk together to the hour of vespers. At night every one went to his own cell. On Sundays they devoted themselves entirely to prayer and spiritual reading. By a careful provision of the rule, the superior was obliged every day to visit each monk in his cell, to study the state of his health and of his soul; and if one or the other had not strength to bear this continual austerity, to move him to a more comfortable room, where such care was taken of him that 'he had not to pine for the nursing of mother or sister;' or if it were his mind that was troubled, then no effort was spared to encourage, to console, and to revive his failing courage.[1]

Such was the rule of the monastery of Arsinoë as of all Pachomius' houses. Paula was so delighted with all she saw and heard that she had for a moment an idea of asking Serapion to admit her, with Eustochium and her little colony of virgins, into one of the female convents founded under the same rule. 'This permission,' says St. Jerome, 'would gladly have been granted to her

[1] *Epist.* 18, *Ad Eustochium.* Cf. 'Regula Sti. Pacomii,' *Bibliotheca Patrum*, tome iv.

—such respect and veneration did she herself inspire'—but her love for the Holy Places made her give up the idea.[1] The place of her rest was Bethlehem, not the desert, and already she was eager to return to it. So, taking leave of the venerable solitaries, she retraced her steps to the Nile, and embarked for Memphis, and so on to the sea. She thus traversed the most curious part of this land of Egypt—the country of hieroglyphics and ancient mysteries—and could see many strange things on her way: Lake Mœris, dug 1,700 years before Jesus Christ to receive the waters of the Nile; the ruins of great cities and temples; the Pyramids, those gigantic tombs of the Pharaohs; the Sphinx, half buried in the sand; and all those marvels which still arrest the attention and admiration of travellers.[2]

To return to Jerusalem by the desert in the midst of the great heats would have been a grave imprudence. It was wiser and shorter to go by sea. Coasting vessels even then plied from Alexandria to Syria. Paula embarked, with all her caravan, on a ship bound for Maioma, the port of Gaza; and from thence, without stopping, she returned to Jerusalem and Bethlehem with 'as much rapidity,' wrote St. Jerome, 'as if she had had wings.'[3]

[1] Inter tot millia monachorum cum puellis suis habitare cupiebat. Et forsitan cunctis eam suscipientibus impetrasset, ni majus sanctorum locorum retraxisset desiderium.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Vidi famosissimum locum.—*Apologia in Ruffinum*, lib. iii.

[3] Tantâ velocitate reversa est, ut avem putares.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

CHAPTER XIII.

ST. PAULA DECIDES TO SETTLE AT BETHLEHEM—SHE BUILDS HER MONASTERIES—HER LETTER TO MARCELLA.

(386–389.)

It was with indescribable joy that Paula found herself once more at Bethlehem after her pilgrimage, which had lasted nearly a year. But, as if tears were always to dim her joys, a cruel blow now fell upon her: her Roman letters, which had accumulated during her absence, announced a terrible misfortune. Her youngest girl, Rufina—that child who wept so many silent tears on the shores of Ostia at her mother's departure—delicate and weak like her sister Blesilla, was gone to rejoin her in heaven. This news was a fearful shock to Paula's tender heart.[1] The neighbourhood of the Holy Sepulchre and of the many spots which Christ and His mother had watered with blood and tears seemed to be the only thing which enabled her to bear up against this fresh sorrow, which was, alas! but the precursor of another; for again and again did God demand of that mother the sacrifice of Abraham.

But, as it always happens in the heavy trials sent to us by God, a great grace was hidden in this sorrow; for Providence, who wished to keep Paula in the Holy Places,

[1] Rufinam, quæ immaturo funere piam matris animam consternavit. —*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

seemed determined to soften her last struggles by detaching her from all the links which still bound her to Rome: for those great sacrifices which rend the very heart, and which go almost to the dividing of soul and body, as the Scriptures say, have bitterness in them which can neither be measured nor suspected beforehand. There is a wide difference between accepting a sacrifice and accomplishing it. In vain one fancies oneself prepared and brave—the moment which is to consummate the sacrifice is always more poignant than one fancied it would be, and the cutting through of the last links tears the heart with an agony which is indescribable.

In Paula's present state what was to be done? Recross the seas! and return to Rome and all its strife and tumult! She could not bear the idea. She wanted God, and not men—a solitude where, unobserved, she could weep and pray. The voice of God seemed to be calling her irresistibly to Himself. He had led her to Bethlehem, where she had found all she sought: forgetfulness, peace, tears, prayers, and holy hope.

The kingdom of heaven is described by our Lord as a treasure buried in a field, which, when a woman finds, she, in her joy, sells all that she has, to buy it. Thus, when God puts a great thought into a soul, this idea remains buried there for a long while, while it is being worked out interiorly, as it were, alone with God, through the inspiration which comes from above. Then, some day, all of a sudden, when the design is ripe for execution, conviction comes that she must rise and give up all for the sake of this treasure. Thus had Paula done for the last four years; and during her Eastern travels the same thought pursued her. She pondered over it, waiting, through all her trials, for God to point out the way—to strike, as it were, the hour. And this

hour was now at hand, both for her and Eustochium, who shared all her mother's thoughts and aspirations. The same feelings influenced Jerome and his companions. These men, who had long been battered by the storms of life, sought now for a retreat, where, in penitence, study, and prayer, they could prepare for their last end. For them, also, Bethlehem was a place of rest.[1] There was, in this association of labour and ideas, a great work to carry out in the Church. Paula, whose concurrence was necessary, saw dimly in the future a mission worthy of herself and of the sacrifices it would entail.

She resolved, therefore, to build at once, near the Saviour's manger, two monasteries—one for women, where she and Eustochium and her little virgin colony would live; and the other for men, for Jerome and his friends. The site chosen for the latter was to the right of the Church of the Nativity towards the north, in a spot a little apart from the high road. A path, which left the street near the tomb of Archelaus, led to this monastery. Paula's convent was placed at some distance, on the side of a hill and nearly at the bottom of the valley. A few ruins in the midst of a field still point out the old site.[2] But until these monasteries were completed, she

[1] Ob id et ego Antiochiam et ille (Vincentius) Constantinopolim, urbes celeberrimas, deseruimus, ut, in agris et in solitudine adolescentiæ peccata deflentes, Christi ad nos misericordiam deflecteremus.—*Contra Joannem Episcopum Hierosolymitanum.* Cf. *Epist. ad Rusticum et ad Marcellum.*

[2] St. Jerome mentions this tomb of Archelaus, near Bethlehem, on the spot '*qui semitæ ad cellulas nostras e viâ publicâ divertentis principium est.*' As to Paula's monastery, we have followed the tradition of P. Quaresimus:—'*Locus in valle quidem, sed situ parum elevatus, appellatur monasterium Sanctæ Paulæ. . . . Nunc a longe cognoscitur ex ibi plantatâ siliquarum arbore.*'—*Elucidatio Sanctæ Terræ, Peregrin. II.*

went and settled herself with her companions in a little house in a retired spot; [1] and found another, still smaller, for Jerome, as his company was less numerous. Then they began on both sides the kind of life they had determined to follow when their regular convents were built—a life of work, study, and prayer.

The writings of St. Jerome, and two letters, which we shall presently quote, addressed to Marcella—one from Paula and Eustochium, and the other from Jerome—give us several details as to these first days at Bethlehem. Whilst Jerome and his friends worked in the garden, the fruits and vegetables of which served for their daily food, Paula superintended diligently the workmen at the new buildings. From time to time she and her virgin colony wandered about in the fields near Bethlehem, singing hymns and enjoying the beauty of that picturesque country. All her life having been spent in Rome, she found intense pleasure in nature and in rambling about the hills and woods and gathering wild flowers. She made frequent visits also to the Manger, to the Holy Places in Jerusalem, and to the convent on the Mount of Olives. The contrast between this simple peaceful life with that of the great Roman ladies in their gorgeous palaces, with their troops of servants and all the noise and hurry of a large city, was full of sweetness for Paula, who had not felt so calm and happy since the death of her children.

But their great occupation was the study of the Holy Scriptures. Until now they had read first one book and then the other. Now, full of the vivid recollections with which the sight of the Holy Places had inspired them, they determined to read the Bible right through from

[1] Angusto per triennium mansit hospitiolo, donec exstrueret cellulas ac monasteria.—*Epist. Paulæ.*

beginning to end, and study it as a whole. In truth, this wonderful Book, composed of sixty different writings, by so many different authors and at such different epochs, still shows the most marvellous unity: unity of inspiration, first of all—it is the same Holy Spirit, speaking by all its interpreters—and unity of plan: for one fundamental idea binds together, as it were, all its parts. This idea, developed in all its epochs—the Patriarchal, the Mosaic, and the Christian—and of which the magnificent development has formed what we call *the Bible*, is the idea of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. The fathers of the Church assert justly that Jesus Christ is in every page of Holy Scriptures, from beginning to end. All that precedes His advent announces and leads to it; and when His coming is related the Holy Books do not stop there—'*for Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*'—but continue in the Acts, in the Epistles, and until the end of time in that mysterious book, the Apocalypse, which leads the faithful through all ages, even to heaven, the object of the race. Paula wished, therefore, that Jerome should go through the whole Bible with her and Eustochium, so as to clear up their difficulties as they presented themselves. Jerome tried to decline this delicate and laborious task; but, as at Rome, yielded to their entreaties.[1] He himself, profiting by the unusual rest and peace of Bethlehem, devoted all his energies to this great study. A grotto close to that of the Nativity, and which tradition still calls the 'Cave of St. Jerome,' served for his retreat. He worked there day after day, and late at night by the light of a lamp, surrounded by manuscripts and assisted by copyists; for

[1] Compulit me ut Vetus et Novum Instrumentum cum filiâ, me disserente, perlegeret.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

the weakness of his eyes and his failing health no longer permitted him to write himself.

Until then he had produced little, but had collected much; and the moment was come to arrange all these sacred and profane treasures and give them to the world. The necessary foundation of all his work was an intimate knowledge of Hebrew. We have already seen how, at Chalcis, he put himself under the instruction of the most learned doctors of the synagogue; and in the preface to the Book of Daniel he speaks of the way in which, in his youth, he began to learn Hebrew from a converted Jew. 'To be able to stutter,' as he writes, 'the harsh sounds of this language, I chained myself to my desk as a slave to the yoke, creeping slowly on through the darkness of these idioms, which to a Roman seemed so barbarous; just as in the galleries of the Catacombs one sees scarcely a glimmer of light through some opening here and there.'

It was still worse when he tried to learn Chaldee, the original language of several of the sacred books, especially that of Daniel. He became so sick of this study that twenty times he was on the point of giving it up. But his master used an ingenious method to make him persevere. He wrote up in Hebrew a favourite sentence of Jerome's, by the poet Virgil, '*Labor improbus omnia vincit*:' and when he was thoroughly discouraged these words served as a goad to this ardent Virgilian. And finally he mastered the difficulty and learnt Chaldee. At Bethlehem, Jerome again, as he expressed it, 'robbed the synagogue for the benefit of the Church.' He had met at Lydda a learned Hebrew scholar called Baranina,

[1] Propter oculorum et totius corpusculi infirmitatem manu meâ ipse non scribo.—*Præf. Comment. in Epist. ad Galatas*, which he wrote at that time.

and engaged him as a master. The Jew dreaded the gossip of his own countrymen, but loved gold; so that he made Jerome pay dearly for his lessons, and only came at night and by stealth. Jerome gave him whatever he asked, and thus resumed the indispensable study of the original language of the Holy Books.[1]

We shall see St. Jerome, later on, referring constantly to one Hebrew authority or the other. Rufinus bitterly reproached him for this, and, by a miserable play on the name of the Lydda Jew, declared that 'Barabbas had been once more preferred to Christ'—so sadly will hatred and jealousy blind the minds of even the ablest men!

When Paula and Eustochium had gone through the Bible with Jerome they wished to study specially St. Paul's epistles. Nowhere is the whole divine plan so clearly demonstrated, or the great Christian mysteries more fully developed, than in these books. But the language used by St. Paul is difficult of interpretation, and it is only when one has become accustomed to his flights of eloquence that one can enter thoroughly into the bursts of love and the earnest aspirations of a soul all on fire, as his was, with divine grace. 'The words of St. Paul,' exclaimed St. Jerome, 'are each and all as so many thunder-claps.'[2] Paula wished to understand them more thoroughly; but she found no commentaries on these epistles. The Latins had failed; even Jerome's old master, Marius Victorinus, the converted rhetorician, had made but a poor thing of it. Paula entreated Jerome to undertake the task, but he drew back in dis-

[1] Quo labore, quo pretio, Baraninam habui nocturnum præceptorem: timebat enim Judæos.—*Epist.* 84. Cf. *In Isaiam* cap. xxxii. 5, 15.

[2] Quot voces, tot fulgura.—*Epist. ad Paulinam.*

may.[1] Not being able to persuade him directly, she used subterfuge, and asked him to explain only the short epistle to Philemon, which has but one chapter. Once engaged in this study, he did not like to draw back, and Paula induced him to begin a commentary on the epistle to the Galatians. Thus Paula began to exercise that happy influence over St. Jerome which lasted for nearly twenty years, and which produced such magnificent results.

These writings of Jerome's were not only for herself:—they were sent beyond the seas, as presents to the solitaries,[2] to Marcella, and to their other Roman friends, and hence all over the West. In the midst of her many labours and occupations, Paula did not forget those whom she loved on earth and from whom she was never separated in heart. Her thoughts were constantly in Rome, where, on her relations' side, she was not forgotten. An active correspondence was carried on between Rome and Bethlehem, which never ceased till death closed her eyes.

About this time she received the news of the death of the venerable Albina, the mother of Marcella, and who had been as a mother likewise to Paula and her children. Marcella felt it the more as she had never before been separated from her; and the letter in which she announced the sad news was soaked with her tears. In it she implored Paula and Eustochium to come and comfort her.[3] Paula and Eustochium were much moved at her letter, but it was impossible for them at that

[1] Opus intentatum ante me nostræ linguæ scriptoribus.—*Præf. Comment. in Epist. ad Galatas.*

[2] Nova Romam munuscula transmissuri.—*Præf. libri III. Comment. in Epist. ad Ephesios.*

[3] De urbe litteræ allatæ sunt annuntiantes et Albinam venerabilem anum præsentiæ Domini redditam, et sanctam Marcellam matris contubernio destitutam magis nunc vestrum, O Paula et Eustochium, flagitare consortium.—*Præf. Comment. Epist. ad Galatas.*

moment to leave Bethlehem, with all their unfinished buildings. St. Jerome comforted them by saying that 'nothing would enable a person to bear the trials of life so much as meditation on Holy Scriptures.'[1] 'I know,' he added, 'how strong is her faith, how ardent her love, and with what noble courage she can lift herself above the weaknesses of human nature;' and with this thought in his mind he hastened to finish his commentary, and sent it to Marcella. He was not mistaken: this delicate attention touched the mourner beyond words; she thanked him most warmly, and implored him to go on with his work and send her regularly the results. St. Jerome reproaches himself in his letters that in his solitude of Bethlehem he did less than that noble Roman matron in the midst of all the interruptions of her great palace.[2] But her request, added to Paula's entreaties, induced him to persevere; so that he wrote a fresh commentary on the epistle to the Ephesians and on that to Titus, and dedicated them to his three friends, Marcella, Paula, and Eustochium.

There was another thought which did not quit Paula's mind, and that was the memory of Blesilla. We may remember that at the time of her sudden death Jerome had left unfinished the commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes, which he had begun to please her, and had not the courage to go on with afterwards. At Bethlehem

[1] Si quidquam est, O Paula et Eustochium, quod virum inter pressuras et turbines mundi æquo animo manere persuadeat, id esse vel primum reor meditationem Scripturarum.—*Præf. Comment. Epist. ad Ephesios.*

[2] Sancta Marcella ad ipsum fieri per epistolas flagitat. Cujus ego quotiescumque studiorum, ingenii, laboris recordor, toties me damno inertiæ, qui in monasterii solitudine constitutus et illud præsepe contra videns, in quo vagientem parvulum adoravere pastores, id facere non possumus quod mulier nobilis inter strepentem familiam et procurationem domûs explet.—*Ibid.*

he resumed this work, and 'as we did not deserve,' he said to Paula and Eustochium, 'to have such a companion in our solitude, I will at least pay this debt to her dear memory and to yourselves.'[1] Bossuet, who also wrote a commentary on that Book of Solomon, and who was its eloquent interpreter in one of his funeral orations over another tomb inopportunely opened,[2] having gone one day to visit the Benedictine editor of St. Jerome's works, Dom Martianay, was delighted to find a superb MS. of this book; and Dom Martianay relates with what emotion Bossuet looked at an old vignette placed at the heading of this commentary, representing St. Jerome explaining Ecclesiastes to Paula and Eustochium before Blesilla, lying in her coffin. The ancient limner had well understood what was St. Jerome's real inspiration in this work!

In the midst of all these occupations, however, Paula and Eustochium had one idea, with which St. Jerome heartily concurred: Why should not Marcella, now that her mother was dead, come and join them at Bethlehem? They decided at last to write her a pressing letter—the only one which has come down to us, and which is full of the fervour and biblical knowledge with which their minds were then imbued. It begins: 'Friendship does not know how to contain itself; impatience admits of no delay. Forgetting our weakness and consulting only our earnest wishes, we venture, although only your humble disciples, to exhort you on our part, O Marcella!—you who first kindled the spark in our souls—you who have

[1] Quoniam non meruimus, O Paula et Eustochium, talem vitæ nostræ habere consortem, tantoque vulnere tunc percussus obmutui, nunc in Bethlehem positus, et illius memoriæ et vobis reddo quod debeo. —*Præf. Comment. in Ecclesiasten.*

[2] 'Oraison Funèbre de Madame la Duchesse d'Orléans.'

covered us with your wings as a hen doth her brood. Will you allow us to fly now without our mother, exposed to the talons of the hawk and trembling at the shadow of every bird of prey? Well, we conjure you with tears in our eyes to come to us—to give us back our dear good Marcella, sweeter to us than any other name on this earth! and what we beg of you is likewise that which is best and most perfect: a path which Holy Scripture recommends as much as ourselves.' . . . And then, kindling with their subject, they go on to prove what rights the Holy Land had to her preference by what they call the '*Sacrament of Jerusalem*.'

'The first words of God to Abraham were: "Go forth out of thy country and from thy kindred and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall show thee." Now, what does God require of the patriarch? Was it not to quit Chaldea, the "Land of Confusion," and Sennaar, the "Plain of Pride," where the Tower of Babel had raised its head to heaven, and to come and inhabit the Promised Land, a region which was not watered, like Egypt, with earthly streams, but with the dews of Divine grace? From this city arose the choir of ten thousand voices which welcomed David when he returned victorious from the Philistines—that is, from Satan. Open the Book of Genesis, and you will see that it is in this city again that Melchisedech reigned, the Prince of Peace, who offered bread and wine, symbols of Christ and of that mystery which we celebrate on our altars. . . . It is, indeed, the City of the Saints, the City of the Prophets. All the Christian mysteries were accomplished here. Symbol of the Trinity, she bears three names: *Jebus*, what one tramples under foot; *Salem*, peace; *Jerusalem*, the vision of peace; because we must have trampled Satan under our feet by a penitential life before we can

enjoy peace and the vision of peace.' . . . Then, referring to a Roman objection against Jerusalem, they continue: 'But you say, all this was very well while "the Lord loved the gates of Sion more than all the tabernacles of Jacob;" but since then is not Jerusalem accursed? Did not the Saviour pronounce that anathema, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldest not? Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate"? And was not this anathema fulfilled at the time of that horrible siege, when, according to the Jewish historian Josephus the angels were heard to cry out, "Let us go hence! Let us go hence!" Well, you say that the angel guards and the grace of Jesus Christ have retired from Jerusalem since the Saviour prophesied its ruin. But the Saviour would not have wept over it if He had not loved it. He wept over Lazarus, too, because He loved him. Remember, besides, that the sin was that of the people, not of the city. As for the city itself, it is more august now than it has ever been. The Jews revered in it the Holy of Holies, where dwelt the Cherubim and the Ark, the Pot of Manna, Aaron's Rod, and the Golden Altar; but do we not still more revere the Holy Sepulchre? Each time that we go in we seem to see our Lord in His winding-sheet, and the angel seated at His feet, and the shroud folded beside His head. It is of this tomb, long before it was hewn out of the rock, that Isaiah prophesied, "*His sepulchre shall be glorious.*" ' . . . Then, having discussed a passage in the Apocalypse, where the great city in which our Saviour was crucified is called Sodom and Gomorrah, and proved that this text should be explained by the

world and the devil, and not by Jerusalem, they continue: 'You call it an "accursed land" because it has drunk the blood of the Redeemer. Yet those spots are considered blessed which witnessed the martyrdom of Peter and Paul, those chiefs of the Christian family who gave their lives for Jesus Christ. If the confession of the servants be glorious, how much more that of the Master? We venerate the tombs of saints and martyrs, and press our lips upon their ashes; and yet these very people will not allow us to honour the tomb of the Saviour of the world! Who can count the number of confessors, martyrs, and bishops who have been to Jerusalem, persuaded that something would be wanting to their Christian perfection if they had not come to drink at the true source? Certainly, if our great orators declare, with reason, that Greek can be learnt but at Athens, and true Latinity at Rome, should we be able to attain to the heights of Christian science in any other spot than in our Athens, that is, in Jerusalem?' . . . 'We do not pretend,' they continue, 'that we bear in ourselves the kingdom of God, or that there be not saints in other countries; but here, where we came, as the humblest and the last of all, we have found the Prince of the Universe. See, all that is most illustrious in Gaul comes here; the Briton, so far removed from our world, turns his back to the setting sun and comes to visit spots of which he knew only by hearsay; and what shall we say of Armenians, Persians, Ethiopians, men from Pontus and Cappadocia, lands as fertile as Egypt in monks and solitaries, and yet all hastening to the Holy Places, all sending swarms to the East? They are men of divers tongues, but their faith is one. All the nations in the world are represented in the choirs of Jerusalem. And if we come to the Manger, to Mary in

her retreat, to our Bethlehem—for every one feels most for what belongs to him—where can we find words to describe the Grotto of the Nativity, the cradle which witnessed the babyhood of the Son of God? Certainly, we had better hold our tongues altogether on this point than to babble faint praise.'

Then, to press their argument still further, Paula and Eustochium made a comparison between their lives at Bethlehem and at Rome.

'Ah! certainly, we have no grand porticoes, no gilded ceilings, no palaces built with the sweat and blood of the poor; neither have we your glorious basilicas with their arched roofs and avenues of columns. No; here there is but a cavern—a little fissure in the rock, a little recess in the earth; but it is here that He was born who made the heavens. It is here that He was wrapped in swaddling clothes, shown to the shepherds, revealed by the star, adored by the Magi. . . . Ah! we feel that this spot is more sacred than our Tarpeian Rock, so often struck by thunder, because God loves it not.'[1] And not only Pagan Rome, the Babylon of the Apocalypse, paled before the eyes of Paula; but even the splendours of Christian Rome were spoiled, according to her idea, by the restless, noisy life which she so detested. 'I am quite willing to allow,' she says, 'that at Rome is Holy Church; that it teems with trophies of apostles and martyrs for the faith; it is there also that, on the ruins of ancient Paganism, Christianity daily grows and spreads.[2] But ambition,

[1] Ecce in hoc parvo terræ foramine cœlorum Conditor natus est; hic involutus pannis. . . . Et hic, puto, locus sanctior est rupe Tarpeiâ, de cœlo sæpius fulminatâ.—*Epist. Paulæ et Eustochii ad Marcellam.*

[2] Est quidem ibi sancta ecclesia, sunt trophea Apostolorum et martyrum; est Christi vera confessio, est ab Apostolo prædicata fides et

luxury, the grandeur of a town, the necessity of seeing and being seen, of hearing and talking, of praising or blaming, and all that bustle and crowd which cannot be avoided—ah! that is far enough from the calm and peace of a monastic life. People come and pay visits. If you admit them, good-bye to silence; if you shut your doors you are proud, you are inhospitable; and if you have to return these visits, you must go into these palaces, and traverse their magnificent apartments amidst a tribe of chattering, obsequious slaves. . . . That is life in Rome. But here all is simple and peaceful; and, save for hymns or psalms, nothing interrupts the silence. You go out into the country; you hear the peasant driving his plough, chanting an "Alleluia"; you see the reaper binding up his sheaves, humming a psalm; the vine-dresser pruning his vines, and repeating to himself the Songs of David. These are the tunes of this country—the love-songs, as they call them, of the shepherd and the peasant.' The letter ends by an urgent appeal, in which one sees all that Marcella was to Paula and Eustochium, and how souls like these know how to love one another.

'Oh! when will the day come when a courier, out of breath, will bring us this good news—"Marcella, our Marcella, has landed in Palestine!" Already we see ourselves rushing to meet you, to throw ourselves in your arms, to hold you tight to our hearts. Yes, the day will come when we shall go together to the Holy Sepulchre to weep at our Saviour's tomb. I with a sister, Eustochium with a mother, we will kiss together the wood of the Cross, and then go up to the Mount

gentilitate conculcatâ, in sublime se quotidie erigens vocabulum Christianum.—*Epist. Paulæ et Eustochii ad Marcellam.*

of Olives. We will then go to the banks of the Jordan; we will pray on the tomb of David. We will visit Nazareth, that "Flower of Galilee," and Hermon, and Thabor, and Cana, and Naïn, and Capernaum, and the Lake of Gennesaret. And thence, passing by Shiloh and Bethel, we will return to our delicious solitude at Bethlehem, and there, with hymns and psalms, and tears and prayers, we will exclaim together, "*I have found Him whom my soul loveth: I have held Him: I will not let Him go!*"'[1] These last words reveal Paula's whole soul. It was for this she had come to Bethlehem —to weep away a great sorrow, to pray with a fervent love, to sing with a holy hope.

To this letter of Paula and Eustochium's, Jerome added one of his own, which equally reveals the motive of his retreat: the love of his great works, disgust at worldly vanities, and the need of silence and peace to think of eternity. Bethlehem is for him, as for Paula, the much-desired 'haven where he would be.' After having reminded Marcella of the great labours of Origen, and given a vivid picture of the falseness and misery of a worldly life, the anxieties resulting from passion and cupidity, and the hidden thorn pricking continually a worldly man's heart, he exclaimed: 'Ah! we who have escaped all this, who have been so long battered about by the storms of life, with what heartfelt joy and happiness have we found ourselves at last in port!'[2] Then he drew a poetical picture of their life at Bethlehem, while waiting for the completion of their monasteries:

[1] *Epist.* 44, *Paulæ et Eustochii ad Marcellam.*

[2] Quapropter, quia jam multa vitæ spatia transivimus fluctuando, et navis nostra, nunc procellarum concussa turbine, nunc scopulorum illisionibus perforata est, cum primum licet, quasi portum quemdam secreta ruris intremus.—*Ibid.*

'Our food is simple but healthy: brown bread and vegetables, cultivated by ourselves, with fresh milk; that is all. In such a life sleep does not hinder prayer, nor over-eating, study. In the summer we sit out under the shade of the trees; in the autumn the air is so soft, and a rest on dry leaves so delicious! The spring brings back the flowers which perfume the air, and the birds mingle their songs with the chaunting of our psalms. And then, when winter comes, with its frost and cold, the forests of Bethlehem furnish plenty of wood for our fires. Let Rome have her bustle, the circus its follies, the theatres their dissipations, and, not to leave out our good friends and acquaintances (ironically), let the senate of fine ladies visit one another every day! We, in our peaceful solitude, have but one happiness—to live for our Lord; but one hope—to trust in Him. And when the day comes when we shall exchange our poverty here below for the kingdom of heaven, we shall be able to exclaim on our side: "*What have we in heaven? and, besides Thee, what do we desire on earth?*" (Psalm lxxiii. 25.) Ah! when one is buoyed up with hopes like these, what misery to hanker after little things which perish for ever!'

But neither the entreaties of Paula and Eustochium nor the words of Jerome could induce Marcella to tear herself away from Rome and her little colony of virgins, which was increasing daily. St. Augustine, who was at that time at Rome, where, after his mother's death, he passed more than a year, speaks with admiration of this holy community whom on his previous visit, before his conversion, he had not even heard of. Only Marcella, to imitate more closely the lives of her friends at Bethlehem, soon after this, left the Aventine for a villa which she had outside the gates of Rome. A young lady named Prin-

cipia took Eustochium's place as her daughter; and, although so great a distance separated the two communities, their lives, thanks to a regular correspondence, may be said to have flowed on together, and Marcella, by remaining in Rome, became really more useful to Paula than if she had come to Bethlehem.

But the works undertaken by Paula drew near to their completion. We do not know the plan on which these monasteries were constructed; but she had arranged that each should have its private chapel, and chose St. Catherine as the patron of her own convent. This virgin had flourished in Alexandria, although not a native of Egypt. Young like St. Agnes, but endowed with extraordinary talents, she had rivalled in study and in eloquence the wisest Doctors of the Church; and in her disputes with Pagan philosophers she had confounded and defeated them. Her martyrdom was horrible: the scourge, the wheel with iron points, all had been tried; and St. Epiphanius had related to Paula that, when passing from Salamis (her birthplace) to Alexandria, she had stopped at Bethlehem, and in presence of the Holy Crib had vowed her virginity to God, which vow had been rewarded by a vision, in which the immortal Spouse of virgins had appeared to descend close to her, and had given her a ring as a pledge of her divine espousals. For all these reasons Paula resolved to dedicate her new church to St. Catherine of Alexandria. Each pile of buildings was surrounded with a high wall and guarded by a watch-tower—a necessary precaution in a country exposed to the incursions of roving Arabs, and to the insults of barbarians who were even then invading Syria.

Her plan was not complete without the addition of a house for the reception of pilgrims, which she built

alongside of the church at Bethlehem.[1] These houses, or hospitals, as they were called, were at that time unknown in Palestine. But Paula had seen them at Nitria and Arsinoë, and had proved their incalculable benefit. Such an establishment was specially needful at Bethlehem, where so large a number of pilgrims were constantly arriving, however onerous such a charge might be to the resources of the monastery. 'Besides,' as Paula said, smilingly, to Jerome, 'if Mary and Joseph come back to Bethlehem, they will at least find a decent inn to receive them.[2]

At the end of three years monasteries, churches, and hospitals were all completed. It was not before the time; the humble little house which had served Paula in the first instance had become much too small. Their numbers increased daily. Her great name had attracted virgins from all parts: some simple peasants, others of rich and noble families;[3] and these last had arrived with great retinues of servants. Paula would not admit them till they had sent all these away.[4] What she wished to establish in her convent was, not a life of luxury, but one of poverty and austerity. She longed to be settled there, and at last all was ready. 'The little bees' (as St. François de Sales said, in speaking of the entry of the daughters of St. Chantal into the Visitation Monastery) 'could at last swarm, and come and work in the new hive, for which Heaven had prepared the dew.'

[1] The convent of the Franciscan Fathers at Bethlehem occupies the very same site at this moment.

[2] Ne forte et modo Joseph cum Mariâ in Bethlehem veniens non inveniat hospitium.—*Epist.* 16, *Ad Pammachium.*

[3] Plures virgines, quas e diversis provinciis congregaverat, tam nobiles quam medii et infimi generis.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[4] Si qua erat nobilis, non permittebatur de domo suâ habere comitem.—*Ib.*

CHAPTER XIV.

ST. PAULA IN HER MONASTERY—THE RULE OBSERVED THERE —HER WISE AND FIRM GOVERNMENT—THE WORKS OF ST. JEROME—MARCELLA'S PRESENTS—PAULA'S CHILDREN AT ROME.

(390–394.)

By her two foundations Paula had created two centres of piety and science, the effect of which was to be felt throughout the Church. The question now arose as to what rule should be observed in her community. St. Jerome tells us it was the rule—still rudimentary, yet admirable—of the Convents of St. Pachomius. Following the example of these cenobites, whom she had seen on the borders of the Nile, Paula divided her children into three groups, having a mother at the head of each. Her little virgin colony was thus separated at meals and during work, but met at stated times in the day for psalms and prayers in St. Catherine's Chapel. At the sound of the 'Alleluia,' they each hastened from their cells to their places in the choir, and Paula was always among the first. They waited till all were assembled; to delay, from any trifling cause, to obey the call was looked upon as a great disgrace, and the shame attending it was the only goad Paula employed in this matter, trusting more to their piety than to any constraint. The three groups met accordingly in the morning, then at the third, sixth, and ninth hours, and finally in the

evening; and even in the middle of the night the voices of Paula's daughters might be heard singing the Songs of David. The whole Psalter was sung daily. All the sisters were obliged to learn it by heart, and were each day also to learn a portion of Holy Scripture.[1] On Sunday the whole community went to the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem, each group with its mother at the head, and returned in the same order. For, as yet, the Holy Sacrifice was not offered in the chapels of the monasteries, St. Jerome never having been induced to consent, from a motive of intense humility, to go up to the altar; and Vincentius, the only priest who was then with him, not daring to do what Jerome did not. When they came back the work was given out for the week. They made all the clothes of the community, and when those were done worked for the poor in their neighbourhood. Each sister had her appointed task.[2] No one was allowed a servant, and they were to do everything for themselves. All the sisters wore the same dress of white wool, and used no linen but to wipe their hands. The enclosure was absolute, and all communication from without was rigorously forbidden.

Such was, as a whole, the rule of Paula's convent. She displayed in its government a rare combination of energy and sweetness and a wonderful discernment of individual characters.

Everything in a religious house depends upon the superior. She is the soul of the whole community, and

[1] Mane, horâ tertia, sextâ, nonâ, vespere, noctis medio, per ordinem psalterium cantabant. Nec licebat cuiquam sororum ignorare psalmos, et non de Scripturis Sanctis quotidie aliquid discere.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Die tantum Dominica ad ecclesiam procedebant, et unumquodque agmen propriam matrem sequebatur, atque inde pariter revertentes, instabant operi distributo, et vel sibi, vel cæteris indumenta faciebant, etc.—*Ibid.*

animates them as with one breath. Everything goes well if the superior be vigilant and energetic; but all is ruined by a lax or careless administration. Thoroughly imbued with the principle that what is scarcely considered as a trivial fault for people living in the world becomes a very grave one when committed by a religious, and that, therefore, one must be consistent and strive after real perfection after having once chosen 'the more perfect way,' she imposed upon herself the utmost vigilance against any invasion of worldliness into her community, and everything which did not tend to foster among them the true monastic spirit. She exacted absolute detachment, true religious poverty, allowing them to possess nothing but their food and clothing, according to the apostle's words: 'Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.' The appropriation of any particular or favourite thing by one or other of the sisters she looked upon almost as a sacrilege.[1] Any over-carefulness in dress or in personal appearance was considered by her as an index that everything had not yet been entirely given up to God. When she perceived little signs of this in one of her sisters, a grave look or a sad expression warned the delinquent in a moment of her fault.[2] She encouraged them to like active work, being well aware that the more you yield to indolence the more hopeless it is to conquer it. In order to guard against the senses, she practised corporal mortifications and fasts to the utmost extent of her strength, and induced her sisters courageously to follow her example,

[1] Excepto victu et vestimento, nullam habere quidquam patiebatur, . . . furtum quasi sacrilegium detestabatur.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Si vidisset aliquam comptiorem, contractione frontis et vultûs tristitiâ arguebat errantem, dicens munditiam corporis atque vestitûs animæ esse immunditiam. . . . Per exteriorem hominem interioris hominis vitia demonstrantur.—*Ibid.*

saying that she 'would rather injure the stomach than the soul.' [1]

In the application of these principles Paula showed herself as firm as she was gentle. 'Shall I come to you with the rod or with the spirit of meekness?' exclaims the apostle; and the strength which she had acquired to apply this rule constantly, and to obtain that command over herself which is so essential in those who are to direct others, were subjects of marvel and admiration to Jerome himself. He represents her as devoted to her spiritual children, and loving them all equally; but studying so carefully the character of each as to dissipate all sadness, prevent rivalry, heal trifling differences and those thousand and one inevitable misunderstandings which so often mar the peace of communities. Her large views and unalterable charity diffused a like spirit throughout her convent. She never allowed anything like disputes; and when, among the varied races of which her community was composed, she found one whose passionate Southern blood would sometimes vent itself in angry words, she would first warn her gently, and if that failed would resort to more rigorous means, and make her pray outside the refectory while the sisters were at their meals, and then be served apart and alone; so as to nip in the bud, by this humiliation, the fault she was so anxious to correct. This rare severity was tempered with so much sweetness and loving-kindness that no bitterness of feeling was engendered in the mind of the delinquents; and, in fact, Paula's own example did more than anything else to maintain fervour and obedience among her children. She and Eustochium would always undertake the lowest offices; so that Jerome said that a

[1] Lascivientem adolescentularum carnem crebris et duplicatis frangebat jejuniis, malens eis stomachum dolere quam mentem.

stranger going into the convent would never believe that they were not the humblest of lay sisters. He drew a picture of them to Pammachius in these terms: 'What do I see? These daughters of the Scipios and the Gracchi, these beautiful and delicate women, to whom formerly a silk dress was a burden, who could not bear the dirt of the streets and the inequality of the roads, who never went out save when borne on the arms of their slaves in their gilded litters—to-day, robed in rough serge dresses, and robust, in comparison with what they were formerly, they are doing the roughest work: making the fires, cleaning the lamps, scrubbing the floors, sweeping the house, shelling the vegetables, cooking, waiting at table—rushing here and there like common servants.' Humble occupations, it is true, but of wonderful sweetness when done for God! Paula's own austerities were such that even when her health became bad she would not yield to one of the sisters in the severity of her fasts. But the harder she was upon herself the tenderer she was to her community, especially if any of them were ill. St. Jerome says that words would fail him were he to describe her devoted attention to their wants and her delicate care of each. She forced them then, if sick, to take both meat and wine, although she would never indulge in either herself: 'Unreasonable only in that respect,' he continues, 'that she would never allow herself what she gave to others.'[1] Such was Paula's life for sixteen years, and such was Eustochium's for thirty, in that Bethlehem convent.

[1] Quid memorem clementiam et sedulitatem in ægrotantes, quas miris obsequiis et ministeriis confovebat? Cumque aliis languentibus largè præberet omnia, et esum quoque exhiberet carnium, si quando ipsa ægrotasset, sibi non indulgebat, et in eo inæqualis videbatur, quod in aliis clementiam, in se duritiam commutabat.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

But the life led by Paula's community did not consist solely in monastic rules, prayer and praise, and manual labour; a great intellectual activity likewise reigned among them, and grave and serious study occupied a portion of each day. In this, as in everything else, St. Jerome was their master and guide.

Jerome's own monastery might be called a sanctuary of science as well as of asceticism. We only know (besides his young brother Paulinus) the names of four of his companions at this time: Vincentius, Eusebius of Cremona, Lupilianus, and Valerian. Vincentius, a priest like Jerome himself, had met him at Constantinople, when both were attending the lectures of St. Gregory of Nazianzum on the Holy Scriptures. And since then similitude of tastes, a common enthusiasm for sacred literature, and the charm of Jerome's ardent and faithful friendship had won him so completely that he had never left him, and shared both his life and his labours.

The fame of Jerome's great piety and the renown of his biblical science had first attracted Eusebius to his side. He was a clever lawyer at Cremona and a brilliant speaker; but, disgusted with the bar, and anxious to lead a holier and less worldly life, he left all to seek for that true light which God reveals to those who desire to find it. His tender affection for Jerome never diminished; and it was Jerome, when dying, who appointed Eusebius as his successor.

Of Lupilianus and Valerian we know neither the age nor the country; but they became acquainted with Jerome at Rome and followed him to the East. Jerome speaks of them as 'no less laborious than austere,' and as encouraging him in all his works and labours.

Hardly were these faithful and devoted friends established in their new monastery, than Jerome conceived

the idea of a great work, in which, from the results of his late journeys and his long and arduous studies, he would be able to elucidate the principal difficulties he had encountered in the Sacred Text. He divided this work into three treatises, which he called '*Questions*,' '*Places*,' and '*Hebrew Names*.'[1] He had also resumed, at his brother Paulinus' entreaty, a work which Pope Damasus had formerly asked him to undertake at Rome, the translation of Didymus' Treatise on the Holy Ghost. His happiness at having exchanged 'the profane mother of Romulus for the grotto of the Saviour of the world' (these are his own words) bursts forth in the preface of this work: 'Helped by your prayers, O venerable servants of Christ, Paula and Eustochium, I sing in this holy spot the canticle which I could not sing in a strange land.'[2] But Paula would not let him rest contented with these learned works—she needed others for her community—and so entreated Jerome to undertake the translation of Origen's homilies on St. Luke, which he consented to do. 'See what your power is over me!' he exclaimed; 'I have been obliged to give up my dearly beloved work on the "*Hebrew Questions*" to take upon me the arduous and wearisome task of a translator.'[3]

But even this did not satisfy her. She had often

[1] Tria hæc opera, quæ circa annum 390 figenda sunt, eodem tempore videtur composuisse.—Bollandists, *Vita S. Hieronymi*, No. 373.

[2] Post Romuli casam, diversorium Mariæ et Salvatoris speluncam aspexi. . . . Tam tuo, mi Pauliniane Frater, quam venerabilium mihi ancillarum Christi, Paulæ et Eustochii, nunc adjutus oratu, canticum quod cantare non potui in terrâ alienâ, hic a vobis in Judæâ provocatus immurmuro, augustiorem multò locum existimans qui Salvatorem mundi quam qui fratris genuit parricidam.

[3] Perspicitis quantum apud me et auctoritas vestra et voluntas valet. Prætermisi paululum Hebraicarum questionum libros, ut ad arbitrium vestrum lucrativis operis hæc, non mea sed aliena, dictarem.—*Prologus in Homilias Origenis.*

heard him relate the touching story of a hermit he had known at Chalcis, and, thinking that it would be edifying for her sisters, she begged him to put it in writing. He obeyed her. The story is as follows: This solitary, named Méleck, had retired to the desert while still young to devote himself to prayer and penance; then, all of a sudden, seized with an irresistible longing to revisit his native country, he had left the desert, in spite of the prayers and entreaties of his abbot, and had turned his steps homewards. Surprised by the Arabs on his way, and made prisoner, he was, like Moses, employed to keep sheep. At the end of a certain time, his master, being well pleased with him, gave him as a reward one of his other slaves as a wife. But the monk, bound by his monastic vow, was ready to die under his master's hand rather than violate it. Whilst he prepared himself for resistance, the woman came and said to him, 'Let our master fancy that you are my husband; but as I believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, let Him know that you are only as my brother.' They lived thus for a long while, preparing means of escape from their captor; which, at last, they were able to accomplish. Their master pursued them in their flight and came upon them just as they had taken refuge in a cave. He rushed in after them, when a lioness, whom none of them had seen, sprang upon him and devoured him; after which she left her den and the two fugitives in peace, carrying off her whelp in her mouth. Thus miraculously saved, Méleck and his companion knelt down and thanked God; after which they mounted the camel of their dead master and crossed the desert in safety. After a short time, however, they were both seized with a longing to return to the desert of Chalcis; and finally Méleck settled himself in his old monastery, and his companion,

whom he loved as a sister, in a convent for women close by. Jerome had heard this story from the mouth of Méleck himself. 'This is,' he writes, 'what Méleck related to me in my youth when I visited Chalcis and found him there advanced in years. Now that I am an old man myself I tell it to you. I unfold a chaste story to chaste souls; I exhort all virgins jealously to guard their virginity. You will tell this story to those who come after you, to teach them that a pure soul is never a captive, neither in the midst of the swords of men nor among the beasts of the forest; and that a man really devoted to Jesus Christ may die, but cannot be conquered.'[1]

Jerome also wrote the Life of St. Hilarion, of whom Epiphanius had been the disciple, and of whom only one letter was then extant. The Lives of the fathers of the desert had not yet been published, and the Life of St. Anthony, by Athanasius, and of St. Paul, by Jerome himself, were the only two biographies as yet written of those great ascetics. But it was an exact text of the Psalms, with an explanation of their meaning, which Paula most desired. We may remember that St. Jerome had already written one at Rome by the command of Pope Damasus; but this version had suffered from the inaccuracy of the copyists. 'Well, then,' exclaimed Paula, 'pass the plough again over the field: as new briars and weeds have sprung up in it, why should you be afraid of cutting it up a second time?' So Jerome began his task. He had that celebrated work of Origen's to help him—the '*Hexapla*,' which Paula's generosity had enabled him to have copied from the

[1] Hæc ego narravi senex; castis historiam castitatis exposui; virgines castitatem servare cohortor. Vos narrate posteris, ut sciant inter gladios, et inter deserta et bestias, pudicitiam nunquam esse captivam, et hominem Christo deditum posse mori, non posse superari. —*Vita Malchi; Opera S. Hieronymi*, tom. iv.

original edition in the library of Cæsarea, and which was the purest text of the Septuagint existing in the Church. From this work of St. Jerome's our actual Psalter is compiled. It was most carefully executed, and abounded in certain critical signs used by Jerome to distinguish the different sources from which he had drawn his inspiration. A line, for instance, was placed before such words as had been added by the Septuagint to the Hebrew text; a star before words omitted by Alexandrian interpreters, and which Jerome replaced by the version of Theodotion; and two dots denoted the ending or beginning of these suppressions or restitutions.

It was extremely important that these revisions should be carefully copied. This Paula and Eustochium undertook to do themselves, Jerome imploring them to be very attentive to these marks or signs, on which the accuracy of his work depended. Thus began that labour of copying in Paula's convent which afterwards became the universal rule of the monasteries—'a rule,' writes M. Ozanam, 'which we may consider the most useful that was ever framed, if we consider what it preserved to the Church.'

Not content with this work, Jerome added Commentaries to each Psalm in the form of letters; but, unhappily, these have been lost. Finally he revised the whole of the Bible in the same way; and this immense work was pushed forward with such activity that by the year 390 it was completed. These translations were rapidly spread throughout the Church as they appeared fresh from Jerome's pen. That of the Book of Job reached St. Augustine in Africa, who hastened to express his warmest admiration and to implore for a complete version of the whole Septuagint.

But criticisms, on the other hand, were not wanting;

and the exegetical writings of Jerome as well as his philological works were the object of bitter attacks. They accused the first of being only a plagiarism on the Greek, written in bad Latin; and the second of attempting to weaken the revered authority of the Septuagint, and multiplying errors instead of correcting them. 'When one cannot write better than that,' exclaimed one, 'one had better hold one's tongue.' 'Would it not be far better,' said another, 'to do like the solitaries, and weave mats and baskets, or some other useful work?' To these good people it did not signify if their copies were correct or not, provided they were handsomely bound.[1] At Rome, too, envy and jealousy were busy at work, and no sooner had one of his books appeared than his enemies flew upon him as upon their lawful prey.

All these bitter accusations exasperated Jerome, and his indignation made itself felt in the preface of many of his works. Sometimes he would say to Paula, 'There are certain people who would rather drink of a turbid fountain than seek for a pure spring; but it is enough for me to have laboured for you and for those who really love science.' 'You condemn my eloquence,' he exclaimed to his critics; 'I translate Greek badly. Read the Greek, then, if you know the language; if not, you cannot fairly criticise what I have written. My writings are for humble and simple readers; if Ciceronians prefer yours, so much the better. Must there not be what is small to enhance the value of what is great? To climb mountains one has to leave the plains. But perhaps it is the object of my studies which you blame? But is not all wisdom and all eloquence contained in the Word of God? I might, like others, labour for riches or for

[1] Dum magis pulchros habere malunt codices, quam emendatos.—*Vita Malchi; Opera S. Hieronymi*, tom. iv.

human glory; but to money and to fame I prefer my solitude with the Holy Scriptures.' At other times his irony became more biting: 'I have, like Terence, my Luscius Lavinianus, who accuses me of having robbed the public treasury. The Swan of Mantua himself was treated as a plagiarist—for having translated some verses of Homer—to which Virgil replied "that one must be strong to take the club away from Hercules." What is there surprising, then, in the fact that envious men grumble at me, when even such great and glorious writers did not escape their darts? Perhaps, in their case, it was natural: their voices echoed through the forum, in the senate, in the theatre; and, as the poet says, the thunderbolt always strikes the highest pinnacles. But I, who have fled from cities, with their noise and bustle, to hide myself in this solitude—even I am pursued by the self-same envy. . . .[1] But, after all, what does it signify? If only I can attain to a more thorough knowledge of Holy Scriptures, such scarecrows will not daunt me, although it be their nature to make a noise in corners at night to frighten little children.'[2] Notwithstanding this proud contempt, however, the iron entered into his soul. But he had a great help in Paula and Eustochium. Their encouragement gave him back his energy and joy; he trusted in their prayers, and felt that without their aid he should have given up his work over and over again. The sight of their pure and beautiful lives consoled him for the sadness of the times and the bitterness of men, and helped him to rise himself into

[1] Me vero procul ab urbibus, foro, litibus, turbis remotum sic quoque latentem invenit invidia!—*Præf. in Questiones Hebraicas de Genesi.*

[2] Vellem cum invidiâ habere scientiam Scripturarum, floccipendens imagines umbrasque larvarum quarum natura esse terrere dicitur parvulos, et in angulis garrire tenebrosis.—*Ibid.*

those higher regions far removed from the strife of tongues. He speaks continually of these two admirable women with a veneration (deeper for Paula and more paternal for Eustochium) which made him forget, in his humility, the part he had himself taken in forming their characters. Paula and Eustochium were equally filled with admiration for this their spiritual father—this great Doctor of the Church, who poured out for their benefit such treasures of knowledge and set them such an example of ascetic piety. Thankful to have found such a guide, they had in him unbounded confidence, mingled with deep gratitude and a reverent affection—happy and holy union of which it is difficult to say which side derived the greatest benefit.

Thus passed Paula's first years at Bethlehem. She ceased not to invite her old friends at Rome to come and share in her retreat, or, at least, to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Places. We have a fragment of this correspondence in a letter written by Jerome, at Paula's entreaty, to Desiderius, an eminent and eloquent Roman, whose sister Serenilla, 'realised' (as he writes) 'the sense of her name,' and had embraced the serene and tranquil life of one who has consecrated herself entirely to God.

'I do gladly what the venerable Paula has asked me,' he writes, 'and implore you, for the love of Jesus Christ, to give us the great happiness of seeing you by undertaking a pilgrimage to the Holy Places. And if you will not do it for us, do it to satisfy your faith. For it is a part of faith to come and adore the spots where our Saviour's feet have trod, and to visit the sites of His birth and death.'[1]

[1] Adorasse ubi steterunt pedes Domini, pars fidei est, et quasi recentia nativitatis et crucis ac passionis vidisse vestigia.—*Epist.* 48, *Ad Desiderium.*

Very often the couriers who brought the answers to these letters brought likewise little presents, pledges of a friendship which separation had not diminished. One day a large box arrived from Marcella, containing those long robes or habits which nuns and monks at that time wore, with some seats, wax candles, cups, and fans. St. Jerome, in thanking her, contrived ingeniously enough to give a mystical sense to each.

'The robes *en sacque*,' he wrote, 'are symbols of prayer and fasting. The seats signify that a virgin should not wander abroad; the candles, that, like the wise virgins, they must be always awaiting their Spouse with lighted lamps. The cups remind us of our Saviour's chalice which we must hold ourselves in readiness to drink by mortified lives and hearts fit for martyrdom. The fans, so useful in this hot climate to drive away the flies, denote that we must set aside frivolous thoughts; for flies, which die amid sweet perfumes, corrupt and spoil the scent. But to me,' he adds, with a touching humility, 'your presents read a different lesson. The chair suits best one as idle as I am; the robe befits a penitent; the cup, a man who has not yet learnt the entire mortification of his senses. Lastly, in the prickings of conscience in the night-time at the recollection of old sins, it is well to have a light burning near one to drive away the terrors of darkness.'

These fragments of correspondence, which are all that are left to us, show what were the relations of these holy souls and what was the charm and delicacy of their friendship.[1]

But Paula's constant preoccupation was the children she had still at Rome—Paulina and Toxotius—for those

[1] See, in the introduction to the *Monks of the West*, the beautiful pages which M. de Montalembert has written on the affections of the cloister.

two only remained, now that Blesilla and Rufina had gone home. Every joyous or sad event in their lives found an echo in her heart; one felt that the maternal love which had cost her so many struggles had only grown larger in her heart for all that she had given up to God. In the same way the tenderness and respect of her children seemed to increase as years went by; so that, in spite of the distance which separated them, her influence remained supreme, and, although at Bethlehem, she guided them still. 'By trampling under foot the riches and pleasures of this world,' writes Jerome, 'she had taught her children towards what higher good they should turn their eyes.' They had well understood the lesson. Paulina and her virtuous husband, Pammachius, proved themselves worthy of so holy a mother. God alone reigned in that happy home. If Paulina had not felt the same vocation as her mother and sister, she was equally determined, by the fulfilment of all her duties as wife and mistress of a household, to deserve the crown of a noble Christian woman. Pammachius, on his side, was one of the most eminent Catholics in Rome. The only sorrow that either wife or husband knew was that Paulina, whose health was very delicate, was not happy as a mother, and lost one after another, in childbirth, the little ones whom God gave her. Each time that this bad news reached Paula her anxiety for Paulina's state almost overpowered her resignation. She kept silence, it is true—no complaint escaped her lips—but her heart was wrung with sorrow. Then, with all the energy of her lively faith, she would quote the Gospel words, 'He that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me;' and then casting herself on her knees before God, and pouring out her whole soul before Him, she would give up to Him again and again the children she

had received at His Hands: 'Unto Thee, O Lord, and unto Thy care, do I commit the children of those who are dying each day in penance for the love of Thee!'[1] And these ardent ejaculations were her only consolation when Paulina or Toxotius was in any danger.

Yet Paulina's longing for children arose from the purest motive. 'I know,' writes St. Jerome, 'that she only wished for them in the hopes of being able some day to give a virgin to Jesus Christ.'[2] This pious couple proposed that, should God grant them this blessing, they would imitate, for the rest of their lives, the chaste virtues of Paula and Eustochium; and it was Paulina who put this idea into her husband's head. Who can wonder, then, at the admiration with which St. Jerome speaks of this whole family?

'In Pammachius' (he writes) 'I find wisdom; for who is a truly wise man but he who lifts himself up above the follies of this world to serve Christ, who is the Wisdom of God? In Paula, justice; and her example pointed out the way to her children. In Eustochium, strength; for what courage is greater than that of a young girl voluntarily sacrificing her youth, her riches, her high birth, her position in the noblest house in the greatest city of the world, to live in poverty and holy virginity in this remote corner of the earth? In Paulina temperance; for she adorns the conjugal state with every possible virtue and honour.'[3]

[1] Scio scriptas infirmitates gravissimas liberorum. Cumque illud virtute complesset: *turbata sum et non sum locuta*; in hæc verba prorupit: 'Qui amat filium, aut filiam, plusquam Me, non est Me dignus.' Et orans, ad Dominum loquebatur: *Posside, Domine, filios mortificatorum*, qui quotidie mortificant pro Te corpora sua.—*Epist.* 48, *Ad Desiderium.*

[2] Ad hoc optasse filios ut Christo virgines pareret.—*Ibid.*

[3] Prudentia in te, in matre justitia, in virgine fortitudo, in nuptâ

Such were Paula and her family; and it seemed as if young Toxotius were destined to give his mother a like happiness. At this period of her history he was just twenty, and betrothed to Læta, the daughter of the Pagan priest Albinus, but herself a pure and pious Christian child, and related to Marcella. Paula had wished for this marriage before leaving Rome, and it was now about to crown all her hopes. Albinus was one of the priests of Jupiter; but it had not prevented his marrying a fervent Christian, although he himself continued his Pagan practices. The union of his daughter with a descendant of the Scipios was sure to flatter his pride. The marriage soon after this was consummated, and Toxotius and Læta lived together under this Pagan roof in the same union of heart and in the practice of the same Christian virtues as Paulina and Pammachius, with their thoughts for ever turning towards Bethlehem, as from Bethlehem so many thoughts and prayers were turned towards them. The day was not far off when Albinus himself would yield to the holy influence of his children, and follow their example by becoming a fervent Christian.

Thus visibly blessed by God, and sanctified by their mother's virtue and prayers, Paula's children filled her maternal heart with joy—a short respite, alas! from previous mourning and sorrow, and to be followed by fresh and still heavier trials.

temperantia prædicatur. Quid enim eo sapientius qui, contemptâ mundi stultitiâ, Christum secutus est Dei virtutem et Dei sapientiam? Quid matre justius? . . . Quid Eustochio fortius, quæ nobilitatis portas et arrogantiam generis consularis virginali proposito fregerit, et in urbe primâ primum genus subjugaverit pudicitiæ? Quid Paulinâ temperantius, quæ, legens illud Apostoli: *honorabiles nuptiæ et cubile immaculatum*, etc.—*Epist.* 48, *Ad Desiderium.*

CHAPTER XV.

TWO GREAT WORKS UNDERTAKEN BY JEROME AT PAULA'S SUGGESTION: THE VULGATE AND THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PROPHETS—PAULA'S ADMIRABLE VIRTUES.

(390–394.)

WE are now coming to the most important works of Jerome's life—his Latin translation of the Bible from the Hebrew text, which M. Ozanam calls 'the boldest and happiest idea that had yet been conceived;'[1] and a complete Commentary on the Prophets. The history of these works is intimately connected with Paula's biography; the great fruit of her life at Bethlehem, and, if I dare say so, her mission in the Church, is there.

The Latin version previously undertaken by Jerome on the text of the Septuagint had not satisfied him. The East possessed four Greek versions of the Bible translated directly from the Hebrew—that of Origen, of Aquila, of Symmachus, and of Theodotion; and in Origen's large editions these different texts appeared verse by verse and side by side, so that they might be directly compared with the original. But these editions were very rare in the West; and, besides, the Greek versions were not publicly read in the Latin churches. What was needed, therefore, was a Latin version of the

[1] *La Civilisation au Ve Siècle*, Leçon 15.

Sacred Scriptures made directly from the Hebrew text. Its necessity was more and more felt every day. The Jews, in their hourly polemical strifes with the Christians, pretended to despise the Septuagint version. Thus, a friend of Jerome's, Sophronius, disputing one day with a Jew on a passage in the Psalms, the Jew exclaimed (as they frequently did in the synagogue, with great contempt for the Christians) that the sense of the Hebrew was altogether different. 'You are always quoting Scripture,' they said constantly; 'and you don't understand it, for you do not know our language.' Jerome did not dissimulate the difficulties he would have to encounter, nor the storm his translation would raise. Were he to stick to the text of the Septuagint, his labour would be superfluous; but should he strike out a new line of his own, would he not be considered to throw disrespect on the recognised version which the Apostles themselves had given to the Church, and would not an inextricable confusion arise between the new version and the old?

Still, the work was evidently necessary. The multiplicity of the Greek versions proved that none was perfect; and Jerome was the only man living whose intimate knowledge of both Hebrew and Latin enabled him to undertake such a task. Confiding, therefore, in the purity of his intentions, and feeling that a great service might thereby be rendered to the Church, Jerome at last yielded to Paula's entreaties, and began his work. He dedicated his translations, as usual, to her and Eustochium, and in his modest and learned preface writes:—

'Every one offers to God's house what he can: some gold, silver, and precious stones; others, rich stuffs of purple and crimson. As for me, I can only offer humble calves' skins; things obscure indeed, but necessary, for

they protect the tabernacle from the heat of the sun and the soaking of the rain.'[1]

He then submitted his work to Paula, saying, 'Read my Book of Kings—yes, *my* book, for that which we have conquered with hard labour and study is indeed our own. Read the Latin and Greek editions, and compare them with my version. . . .' So great was his confidence in the erudition of these holy women! But he had still greater trust in their prayers: 'O you servants of Christ!' he exclaims, 'who pour out the precious myrrh of your faith and love on the head of our Saviour, oppose the shield of your prayers to the arrows of calumny which are about to assail me.'[2]

This was about the year 390. Jerome was then upwards of sixty; but though his body was weakened by age and penance, his soul was full of the flame and vigour of youth.

This translation was not made in the order of the books of Holy Writ, but according to the wants of the Church at the moment. The first four books were those of the Kings; then Job, then the Psalms, then the sixteen Prophets, then the three books of Solomon, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Canticles.[3] All these were completed in less than four years, and in spite of other works; among which we must mention his famous

[1] In tabernaculum Dei offert unusquisque quod potest: alii aurum, argentum et lapides pretiosos; alii byssum et purpuram et hyacinthum; nobiscum bene agitur si obtulerimus pelles et caprarum pilos. Et tamen Apostolus contemptibiliora nostra magis necessaria judicat. . . . Ardorem solis et injuriam imbrium ea quæ viliora sunt prohibent.—*Præfatio generalis de omnibus libris Veteris Testamenti.*

[2] Sed et vos, famulas Christi, rogo, quæ Domini discumbentis pretiosissimo fidei myro ungitis caput, ut contra latrantes canes qui adversum me rabido ore desæviunt, orationum vestrarum clypeum opponatis.—*Ibid.*

[3] Dom Martianay, *Life of St. Jerome*, p. 328.

Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers, composed in 392, in the fourteenth year of the reign of Theodosius, with the object of refuting the insults of Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, and showing the long list of great men whom the Church had already produced.

In this work he mentions the greater part of these translations, and towards the year 394 he sent them all into the West, to a rich Spaniard, named Lucinius, of whom we shall speak later.

At the same time that Paula was urging Jerome to this bold translation of the Hebrew text she pressed him to go on with his Commentaries on the Prophets. The analogy between the prophetic era and the state of the world at that time struck every one. The menaces of the prophets against Tyre and Sidon, Nineveh and Babylon, and Jerusalem herself, seemed to point equally to the fate of Rome; and Jerome did not hesitate to compare the Roman Colossus crumbling under the blows of the barbarians to the vision of Nebuchadnezzar of the brazen statue with the feet of clay. From the holy solitude of Bethlehem it was easier to judge of the condition of the Empire: the hordes of barbarians were already clamouring on its frontiers, and the future fall of Rome was predicted with certainty. These presentiments of ruin, and the sight of the decay of human glories, and of an old world falling into ruins while a new one would rise from its ashes, impressed Paula greatly, and made her feel a double attraction in the writings of the Prophets.

We know the method which Jerome adopted; it shows at once the greatness of his mind and his indefatigable industry. He began by procuring all the existing commentaries on each book, selecting from each what he needed, and writing his own commentary in a clear and simple style; not only because he was obliged to dictate,

on account of the weakness of his sight, but also because, as he said, with great good sense, it would never do for a commentary to need explanation. He considered that the Greek interpreters had dwelt too much on the allegorical, and not enough on the historical meaning of the prophecies; so that in his own commentaries he dwelt principally on the history, adding afterwards the allegorical moral.[1] This method was specially shown in the Book of Nahum, who prophesied at a solemn moment in Jewish history, under the King Ezechias, when the ten tribes were already captive in Babylon, and the two others were besieged in Jerusalem by the Assyrians. 'What does Nahum signify?' writes Jerome. 'It signifies, in Hebrew, consoler.: his prophecy, which announced the ruin of Nineveh, was, in fact, a consolation for the captives and the conquered. But this prophecy, in its moral sense, has another meaning. Nineveh is the type of the world. This prophecy against Nineveh is, then, also the consolation of the saints who are oppressed in this world, but who will find a reward and an avenger later in Him whom they have faithfully served. And as this prophecy refers likewise to the end of the world, symbolised by the ruin of Nineveh, so does it offer us also a great lesson: it teaches us to detach our hearts from all perishable things, and fix them on that which is eternal.'

After Nahum, Jerome commented likewise on Micheas, Sophonias, and Aggeus. But, as he had foreseen, the envious tongues of men did not cease to attack these two great works, and all the more on account of their success.

In fact, his new version of the Bible was received with enthusiasm as soon as it appeared. Pammachius,

[1] Iisdem lineis historia currit et tropologia: sed illa humilior est, hæc sublimior.—*Comment. in Ezechielis cap. xl.* p. 989.

Marcella, and all his other friends at Rome distributed it far and wide. The African bishops adopted it likewise, and read it publicly in their churches. St. Augustine, in a work which he brought out about that time, called 'Speculum,' and which was a sort of selection of various passages of Holy Writ on the Christian virtues, made use, not of the old Italian version, but of Jerome's new translation, for the purpose. But, nevertheless, no sooner did the First Book of Kings appear than all the rage of his enemies was let loose. Jerome, in his preface to the Book of Job, alludes to them thus: 'I cannot publish a single book on Holy Writ without being obliged to defend myself. "I despise," they say, "the Septuagint;" but why, then, did I give formerly a revised edition of this very Book of Job taken exactly from the Septuagint? What! Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, Jews, or heretics may publish their own translations—those who had an interest in veiling Christ's mysteries under a lying interpretation—and all these are accepted; whilst I, a Christian, born of Christian parents, signed with the baptismal cross, who have only laboured to replace what had been omitted, and correct what had been altered, so as to give a faithful interpretation of the mysteries of our holy faith—I alone am to be reproved! Ah! let them keep their old books, splendidly transcribed on purple and white vellum, in gold and silver characters, and with uncial letters, as they are called—let those who like such things keep them—but let us be allowed to content ourselves with humbler copies, which have neither beauty nor richness, but only the merit of being exact.'

In his preface to the translation of the Psalms, and also those which precede the Prophets, Jerome takes refuge, as it were, from envious tongues in the fidelity of

Paula and Eustochium: 'Oh! you faithful friends in Christ,' he exclaims; 'beg Him to make amends to me for the attacks with which I am overwhelmed—He who knows with what object I have laid upon myself this heavy task in a strange tongue.' Again, in his preface to Jeremiah, he complains: 'To everything I write my enemies find something to answer; it would be better to appease their anger by silence;' 'but,' he adds, addressing Paula and Eustochium, 'it is you who force me to go on. Therefore, whilst I am fighting in the plain, lift your pure hands, like Moses, to heaven, so as to obtain the victory.' And again: 'I conjure you to offer up your prayers to our Lord, that as long as I am in this miserable body I may be able to write something which may be agreeable to you, useful to the Church, and worthy of posterity; for, as for the men of the present day, who listen to nought but love or hate, I care very little for their judgment.' At times he glories in their very censure: 'They say that I rob Origen, and that I must not touch the writings of the ancients. Well, I am proud of this reproach; for if it be a crime to translate into one's own language the beautiful writings of the Greeks, let them accuse Virgil and Plautus, Cæcilius and Terence, even Cicero himself, who translated into the Latin tongue, not only certain passages, but whole books of Greek authors. But you, O Paula and Eustochium! pray to God to open my lips that I may speak according to His Holy Word; that my spirit may remain free; and that, full of my subject, I may not even hear the clamour of my adversaries.'

But there was one accusation which touched him more nearly than all the rest. However much the names of Paula and Eustochium were held in veneration in Rome, his persistence in inscribing them at the head

of each of his works was imputed to him as a fresh crime; and, curiously enough, this reproach came down through later centuries. His Benedictine editor, Dom Martianay, mentions with indignation that several times, in comparing the old MS. necessary for his new edition, he found the names of Paula and Eustochium changed by the copyist into 'venerable *brothers*.'

This pharisaical scandal aroused the following eloquent response in Jerome's Commentary on Sophonias: 'There are people who have dared to take offence because I have put your names, Paula and Eustochium, at the head of my works. Are these people ignorant that Olda prophesied when men held their tongues? that, while Baruch trembled, Deborah saved Israel? That Judith and Esther delivered the people of God from imminent peril? I say nothing of Ann and Elizabeth and the other holy women of the Gospel; feeble stars, indeed, if compared with the great constellation, Mary. But shall we turn to the illustrious women in the Gentile world? Does not Plato bring in Aspasia into his Dialogues? Does not Sappho hold the lyre with Alcestis and Pindar? Did not Themiste philosophise with the sages of Greece? And the mother of the Gracchi, your Cornelia, and the daughter of Cato, and the wife of Brutus, before whose austere virtue the courage of both husband and father turned pale—are they not the pride of all Rome? It would take books to tell what admirable women Greece and Rome have produced. I will only add one word: Was it not to the woman that our Saviour Jesus Christ appeared first after His resurrection? Yes; and men blushed not to have sought what woman had found.' [1]

Thus did Jerome answer his detractors. To us that

[1] *Præfat. in Libros Salomonis*, nota *A.*

which scandalised those ill-natured and narrow minds is exactly what charms us to-day. No; neither religion, nor philosophy, nor history, nor Christian poetry condemns those sweet and pure influences which Providence places alongside of saints and geniuses.[1] Be it of fiction or reality, who would dare reproach Dante for his Beatrice? And if one goes further in history, who will not admire, in a higher order, St. Chantal (so like St. Paula in this as in other things) exercising with St. Francis of Sales, in her monastery of the Visitation, the same mission which Paula did at Bethlehem? 'St. Francis of Sales had resolved to write a great work to show the operations of Divine grace. But the holy bishop strove in vain to find the time and leisure necessary for such an undertaking. Fortunately, St. Chantal was there; she was continually urging him on; writing him little notes to induce him to finish his task, and, according to St. Francis' own expression, "holding a knife to his throat, and not giving him a moment's peace." Thus the incom-

[1] M. Ozanam writes: 'While Frank and Saxon virgins filled the monasteries, saints wrote for them, like the Fathers for the virgins of the first centuries. Thus, Fortunatus for St. Radegonde, spouse of King Clotaire; St. Boniface for Lioba, Abbess of an English monastery, who, later on, continued his apostolic labours and founded convents in the German forests to educate his barbarian converts. Thus, Alcuin reckoned the daughters and nieces of Charlemagne among his disciples; they asked him for a Commentary on St. John, and reminded him that Jerome did not despise the prayers of Paula, "while there was far less distance from Tours to Paris than from Bethlehem to Rome." Henceforth, Christian women take rank both in letters and theology: in the tenth century Hroswitha; in the twelfth St. Hildegarde; later on, it is St. Catherine of Sienna who shares the glory of the greatest writers; and St. Theresa, who astonished the whole world by her genius. This influence continued; and in the middle of the seventeenth century the greatest minds coveted the suffrages of a certain number of incomparable women.'—*La Civilisation au Ve Siècle*, tome xi. p. 108.

parable "Treatise of Divine Love" was begun and completed.'[1]

St. Jerome was obliged to interrupt his work at this time for a polemical discussion, in which his friends at Rome entreated him to take part. Helvidius had been born again in Jovinian. Jovinian was that false monk whom Jerome had exposed in a letter to Eustochium which we have already quoted, exaggerating his austerities, going barefoot through the streets of Rome, with wild, long hair and dirty clothes. Suddenly, one fine day, he threw off his monastic habit, cut his hair, became rich, kept a capital table; and then began attacking monastic life as violently as he had before practised it. He brought forward, with great ability, all the arguments of Helvidius against mortification and voluntary virginity, and against the holy Mother of God, whom St. Jerome, with all the doctors of his time, both in the East and West—St. Ambrose, Pope Damasus, St. Chrysostom, &c.—gave as a model to all virgins. Marcella and Pammachius denounced the new heretic to Jerome. Jerome was indignant at hearing that these miserable doctrines which he had crushed years ago were again revived and had made fresh victims in Rome; for Marcella knew several virgins—some even of a certain age—who had renounced their virginity and married in consequence. So that he wrote a thundering refutal of the heresy, which crushed 'this new epicure among the Christians,' as Jerome called him; and, in spite of some hostile criticisms, his eloquence had the desired effect in stopping the mischief.

A pleasanter distraction than these angry discussions was the care he took of the children round Bethlehem. By a contrast often seen in history and in real life, this

[1] *Histoire de Ste. Chantal*, tome ii., by M. l'Abbé Bougaud.

great mind delighted in the simplicity and even in the weakness of little children; so that as soon as his monastery was open, he received them (as they did likewise in the convents of St. Pachomius),[1] instructed them himself in sacred and profane literature, and did not hesitate, for their sakes, to turn again to the classic authors who had delighted his own youth, and to whom he owed the eloquence which he was now employing in the service of sacred literature. In the preface to his Epistle to the Galatians, he had said to Paula, 'It is now more than fifteen years, as you know, since I have touched Cicero, Virgil, or any profane author. And who now studies Aristotle? How many people know the writings of Plato? while the Apostles—simple peasants or fishermen—are known and quoted throughout the whole universe.' But when once settled in his monastery, and engaged in those great biblical works, profane literature ceased to be a seduction to him; nor would he deprive his pupils of the advantage of studying those great models of taste and eloquence at the fountain head. The large mind of Jerome had understood that 'the alliance of profane with sacred wisdom could only turn to the glory of God and the honour of the Christian family. The noble love of letters is the companion of laborious work; of fasts and not of good living; of continence and not of pleasure.' Of this he was himself the proof as well as Paula and Eustochium; for at the very time that they were spending such studious and industrious lives they imitated Jerome in all his austerities. Paula never drank wine or anything but water, or ate anything but bread and vegetables boiled in water; only on feast days they added a little oil. Eggs, honey, fish—all those little

[1] 'Regula S. Pachomii a S. Hieronymo in Latinum conversa,' Nos. 96, 97: *Bibliotheca Patrum*, tom. iv. p. 90.

extras which would be considered by many people as still involving regular abstinence—she never touched. Her health, however, broke down under such a regimen, and she became very weak; but her courage exceeded her strength, and even acute suffering did not make her moderate her penitential life. Her bed was like a hair shirt, stretched on the bare ground; and even when fever consumed her she could not be persuaded to rest on any softer couch; 'if that could be called rest,' says St. Jerome, 'which was spent almost entirely in prayer.' And with these prayers, she shed so many tears, especially if she had committed any trifling fault, that Jerome tried to stop her. 'You must be more careful of your eyes,' he would say, 'that you may help me in copying Holy Scriptures.' But she would exclaim, 'Ah! what do you say? I ought, on the contrary, to try and disfigure this face which I have so often painted, contrary to God's law. I must subdue this body, which formerly I pampered with all kinds of luxuries. I must replace my purple and fine linen by rough hair shirts. Too long have I tried to please the world; I now wish to do nothing but to please God.'

There was another point in which Jerome in vain endeavoured to moderate Paula's zeal, and that was in the prodigality of her charity. Not that Paula was really wanting in prudence; on the contrary, Jerome says that she had a wonderful ingenuity in multiplying her resources. But her means were limited, and her charity knew no bounds. She never could bear to refuse anybody. Seeing her lavishing clothes, food, and money, not only among the poor in Bethlehem, but also among all the pilgrims who flocked to her convent from all parts of the earth, whereby she not only exhausted her own income, but the little fortune of Eustochium, Jerome thought it

right to interfere. 'Our Saviour,' said Jerome, 'has said in the Gospel, "If thou hast two tunics, give one to him who hath none;" but He did not say, "Give them both."'

'In the same way, as the Apostle writes, you are not obliged, by relieving others, to bring yourself into want. But the perfection of charity is to share your abundance with the indigent; besides' (he adds), 'if giving away things affords you so much pleasure, you should husband the means to go on doing so always.'

Paula listened to his words with respect, but yet ventured sometimes on an answer. 'You fear,' she replied, 'that my means will be exhausted; but I shall always have credit; and if I take to begging, you may be sure that people will readily help me. But if these poor people cannot obtain what they want from me, where will they go? What can become of them? And does not Holy Scripture say, "As water puts out fire, so do alms extinguish sin"; "Give alms, and the fire of charity will purify your sins"? and again: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when you fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations"?' Then she would speak so eloquently of the way in which our Lord regarded what was done to the poor and needy as done to Himself, and of the happiness of resembling Jesus Christ by real poverty, and being stripped of everything, that Jerome had no longer the courage to insist, and left her to her own devices. After having mentioned these things, he added: 'If those who read what I have written fancy that I have here blamed instead of praising her, be it so; I am writing her biography, and not a panegyric, and I speak as one Christian should do to another—the truth. But let these severe censors own that Paula's faults, if we choose to

call them so, would be the highest virtues in others, as we all feel who are inconsolable at her loss.'[1]

[1] Dicat prudens lector pro laudibus me vituperationem scribere. Testor Jesum me nihil fingere, sed quasi Christianum de Christianâ quæ sunt vera proferre, id est historiam non panegyricum scribere, et illius vitia aliorum esse virtutes.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

CHAPTER XVI.

THE INFLUENCE OF PAULA'S CONVENT IN THE CHURCH—THE VISIT OF ST. EPIPHANIUS.

(394.)

THE labours and virtues of which we have given a feeble record attracted men from all sides to these admirable foundations. Paula had fancied she would hide herself from every one by coming to Bethlehem; and she was, on the contrary, an object of admiration to the whole world. These monasteries were like lighthouses, throwing their bright radiance far and near. Consulted on every side, Jerome was obliged to keep up an incessant correspondence; and at the same time Paula's convent became too small to receive the host of pilgrims who flocked to it from every quarter, and who, when they went away touched and enchanted at what they had seen, spread through their own country vivid descriptions of what had so greatly excited their admiration.

We have already alluded to St. Augustine, who, converted by St. Ambrose, had gone to Rome after the death of St. Monica, and there being strongly impressed by Paula and her holy friends in their attempts at forming a convent on the Aventine. Since his return to Africa, his thoughts continually recurred to Paula and Jerome, and to the monasteries from whence emanated such wonderful works on the Holy Scriptures. A good many

of these books had been sent to him, which he much admired, especially the Book of Job; and his great wish was to see those monasteries with his own eyes, of which the fame had been spread far and wide. But his delicate health preventing his undertaking so long a journey, he sent to Bethlehem his second self, Alypius, the oldest and dearest of all his friends. Alypius had followed him from Africa to Rome, and from Rome to Milan; without sharing in his vices, he had fallen into the same errors, had been converted at the same time, had followed him then to his retreat at Cassiacum, to the Baptistery of Milan, to Rome, and finally to Africa, where he had shut himself up with him in the same monastery. He, too, was a priest and about to become a bishop. He arrived, therefore, at Bethlehem, where he saw Jerome and Paula, and their respective communities, and returned to St. Augustine, to whom he related all the wonders he had seen. Augustine was so delighted at his report that he wrote to Jerome as follows: 'One does not know those whom one sees daily face to face as well as I know you by your admirable writings. The only thing I need is to have had the advantage of a knowledge of your person. And yet even that I can say that I have seen; for Alypius has had that happiness, and Alypius is my second self; he and I are one—in affection, at least, for in virtue he is far above me.' Thus an intimate friendship was formed between these two great men—one at the dawn of his reputation, and the other in his declining years—a friendship which closely united the solitary at Bethlehem and the future bishop of Hippo in the same struggles for the faith.

Gaul also, as well as Africa, sent its emissaries to Bethlehem. Among these was the monk Posthumian, whose impressions are related in the 'Dialogues' of

Sulpicius Severus. This monk had heard Jerome very much abused and decried, but it struck him that his detractors were those who might take to themselves his satires against scandalous clergy, whilst his friends and panegyrists were among the best and holiest men in the Church. He came, accordingly, to Bethlehem, and remained six months there, 'not being able,' he writes, 'to tear himself away from what he saw and heard. He saw Jerome, in spite of his advancing age, active, indefatigable, always at work, snatching for study every moment which was not devoted to his guests, and prolonging his labours far into the night—so that he never seemed to rest.'[1] And yet, what astonished him most, and all the pilgrims who visited Bethlehem, was not Jerome, but Paula. 'Who does not allow,' exclaims Jerome, 'that what strikes the pilgrims from all parts of the world who come to Bethlehem is Paula herself! As in a jewel, there is sure to be one rich diamond which eclipses all the rest in fire and beauty, so Paula, from the very depths of her humility, eclipses us all. She has made herself little in her own eyes, but she is only thereby the greater. The more she abases herself at the feet of Christ, the more He is pleased to exalt her. She hides herself from all eyes, but her virtue sheds its lustre abroad and betrays her. Thus this very human glory from which she has fled pursues her, because this glory follows virtue, as shade follows the light.'[2] Her example brought her also many imitators. Since she left Rome one of her most intimate friends, Titiana, the mother of the young Furius who had married Blesilla, was dead. Her young daughter Furia (whom Jerome had not known at that time, as she was a child) had grown up and married a son of the famous Olybrius Probus. But, like

[1] *Dialogus*, i. 9. [2] *Epitaph. Paulæ.*

Blesilla herself, she had been left a young widow and without children. In this perilous position Furia strove to imitate Paula's example. But her father was old and a widower; and, although an excellent Christian, could not make up his mind to see his child bury all human hopes under the monastic veil. Furia then needed counsel, and she wrote to Bethlehem. Paula was rejoiced at her letter, and looked upon it as the fruit of Titiana's holy prayers.[1] Jerome hastened to answer it, and to encourage the young Roman widow in her pious designs.

'I know that I am going to bring down upon myself' (he writes) 'the whole troop of patricians. Even from this distance I hear the explosions of their wrath: *Iratusque Chremes tumido desæviet ore*' (Chremes, open-mouthed, will spit out his bile). 'But what does that signify?' He then goes on to point out to the young widow the great motives for remaining as she was, and shows her the way. It was much the same as his old letter to Eustochium; and as to the paternal opposition she had met with he treats it as follows: 'I would not separate the daughter from the father. *Honour thy father*, but not to the extent of allowing him to separate you from God, the first of all Fathers, or from His great love. I pronounce your father's name with the greatest respect, not because he is noble, and a consul only, but because he is a Christian! Well, then, let him deserve this great name! The husband that he gave you, even had he been more worthy of your love, would equally have been taken from you by death. Seize, then, the occasion which God has given you, and make a virtue of necessity. This resolution will one day fill your father with joy, even though he may now oppose it; you will

[1] *Epist.* 47, *Ad Furiam.*

thus be the great grace of his old age. His hairs have whitened; his knees tremble; his teeth drop out; wrinkles furrow his fine brow; death is at hand. Let him prepare himself, then, by the noble sacrifice of a daughter given to God as a viaticum for the last long journey. . . . Oh, doubtless,' he continues, 'your father loves you fondly, but he does not love you rightly. His heart fills him with illusions on your behalf. You have in your family this glorious privilege, that since Camillus there has been scarcely an example of a second marriage; so that you would deserve less praise for maintaining your widowhood than blame, if, as a Christian, you could not follow the path in which so many of your Pagan ancestors have walked. . . . Imitate, I entreat of you, the example of your holy mother. Every time I think of her I remember her ardent love for our Lord: her face pale with fasting, her abundant alms to the poor, her charitable care of God's servants, the modesty of her dress, the purity of her heart, and her admirable reserve in speech. Must I speak to you likewise of those two flowers of your family, Paula and Eustochium? No; I had better refrain. I should have too much to say. I will not speak to you either of Blesilla, who followed her husband, your brother, so quickly to the tomb, but who acquired, in her short widowhood, such great merit.' But at the close of his letter he cannot help coming back upon Eustochium. 'Oh! if you only could see her!' he exclaims; 'if you could hear her words: what a great soul is enclosed in that frail and delicate body! You would see all the treasures of the Old and New Testament in that heart on fire with divine love. Fasting is a joke to her; her happiness is in prayer. Like Miriam, the sister of Moses, with the timbrel in her hand, she marches before the choir of virgins, singing the

praises of God. It is she who teaches them how to chaunt, and makes them learn the sacred psalms. Thus pass her days and nights. Thus does she wait, with her lamp ever full of oil, for the arrival of her Spouse. Imitate, then, this your noble sister, and let Rome in that way rival Bethlehem.' He goes on to quote the examples of the holy widows in the Bible, and ends with the words, 'But why should I seek any more models? Have you not got them already in Rome, in the venerable Marcella, among others?'

But whilst this young widow thus sought for advice in one direction, from Spain another counsel was asked by certain souls bound by marriage ties, but who, by a special grace, found themselves mutually called to follow a more perfect way. Jerome considered that Christian virtue was capable of lifting up these souls, by a superhuman love of God, to the transformation of conjugal love into a simple and intimate union of heart and mind. This kind of higher direction, which was then heard of for the first time in the history of the Church, is revealed to us in a memorable correspondence of St. Jerome about the year 394.

The following occasion gave rise to these letters: A rich Spaniard, named Lucinius, whom we have before mentioned, had given himself up to the study of St. Jerome's translations of the Holy Scriptures; and for this purpose sent six copyists to Bethlehem to transcribe, under Jerome's own eyes, all the works that had hitherto appeared from his pen. They were received in Paula's hospital for strangers during the time that such a labour required. But Lucinius wanted something more; his letter to Jerome explains that, touched by the virtue of those illustrious Romans who had left all to live near the manger of Bethlehem, he and his wife Theodora wished to imitate

them from afar, and live together as brother and sister in practices of piety and good works. He asked Jerome's advice in this delicate matter, and also some directions for this new kind of life.

Jerome encouraged him warmly, and exhorted him to perseverance.

'As you have left the plains,' he writes, in his usual figurative and Biblical language, 'and taken your course towards the mountains; as you have touched the hem of the garment of Jesus Christ, ah! let me conjure you, with all the affection of a father, not to leave the path you have once embraced. Do not come down from the house-top, as the Gospel says, to fetch what you have left below. Many begin well; but to persevere to the end is the glory of a few. See! your companion according to the flesh is become your companion according to the spirit; formerly a weak woman, she now shows a manly courage; you may be her superior in authority, but she equals you in generosity. Well, then, walk together onwards and upwards, bearing the same yoke, until you arrive at the celestial kingdom!'[1]

'By what road?' Lucinius had asked. By the royal road of detachment and penance. Jerome knows no other. Lucinius gave largely to the poor. Jerome encouraged him to continue and even increase his alms, as charity to the poor is always a companion to the love of God. But he adds, 'When one has given all to Jesus Christ, still one thing remains to be done—to give oneself; for God asks for our whole hearts, and they are more to Him than all our treasures.' And as Lucinius had added certain presents to his letters, Jerome sends him some in return, but of a significant kind. 'The two cloaks and the woollen robe you have sent me,' he

[1] *Epist.* 52, *Ad Lucinium.*

continues, 'I will wear myself or give to some saints. Here are, in return, for you and your sister Theodora, two symbols of penance—hair shirts—which will not be useless in the life you propose to lead, and which I am sure you will wear.'

Then he entreated them to come to the Holy Places, and promised them the warmest welcome.

Jerome had taken an extraordinary affection for this young man, whom he was directing beyond the seas in a more perfect way; but Lucinius could not come. God called him to a more distant pilgrimage, even to that of the heavenly Jerusalem. Jerome was deeply grieved at his sudden death, and wrote a most touching letter to his widow, in which he expresses in beautiful words, well worthy of our meditation, the transformation which he had conceived and preached of natural affections into a love raised to a higher and purer level. 'I weep for him with joy,' he writes to Theodora: 'not that I do not know and feel sure that he has passed to a better life; but I grieve for myself, and that I have not been permitted to see his face—I, who so joyfully and anxiously expected him here. For you, you lose in him the dearest and tenderest of brothers; yet rejoice, and be assured that he reigns at this moment with Christ. A conqueror and in full security of bliss, he watches you from heaven; he smiles upon your labours, and helps by his prayers to prepare a place for you close to himself with the same delicate love which had made a brother of your spouse, and of you a sister.'[1]

Scarcely had Lucinius's messengers departed than

[1] Obsecro te ut Lucinium tuum desideres quidem ut fratrem, sed gaudeas regnare cum Christo. . . . Ille jam securus et victor te aspicit de excelso, et favet laboranti et juxta se locum præparat, eadem charitate quâ, oblitus officii conjugalis, in terrâ quoque sororem te habere cœperat, imò tu illum fratrem.—*Epist.* 53, *Ad Theodoram.*

another illustrious Christian, reckoned, later on, among the saints, sought to draw inspiration for himself and his wife from the same source. This was Paulinus of Aquitaine. He had lately edified the Church by his conversion and his generous renunciation of the world. Still in the flower of his age, the richest man of his time, possessing vast dominions in Gaul, Spain, Campania, and Sicily, loved by the Emperor, a consul at twenty-two, the favourite scholar of a renowned poet, a poet himself, and already surrounded with a literary halo, Paulinus, all of a sudden one day, struck with the vanity of everything here below, and delighted at the sight of a religion which despised all things for Christ, had left the world and had gone to hide himself in one of his own villas beyond the Pyrenees, where, with his wife Theresa, who shared all his feelings and had been touched by a like grace, they had resolved to practise every Christian virtue. But wishing for guidance in this new path, he addressed himself to Jerome, and earnestly sought his direction and advice.

A messenger, named Ambrosius, arrived accordingly one day at Bethlehem, bearing a letter from Paulinus. Paulinus was not unknown to the solitaries. Eusebius of Cremona, particularly, had seen him a great deal in Italy, and enchanted Jerome by all he had told him of his talent and his virtues. But what delighted them in his letter was less its cleverness and beauty of style than the admirable sentiments it contained. Paulinus wrote as if he were an old friend; and Jerome hastened to answer it, and accept a friendship of which the love of Christ was the link, and from which all human motive was absent.[1] Paulinus asked for advice to walk in the

[1] Vera illa necessitudo est et Christi glutino copulata quam non utilitas, non adulatio, sed Dei timor et Divinarum Scripturarum studia conciliant.—*Epist.* 53, *Ad Paulinum.*

most perfect way. Jerome understood that the first thing was to detach him from Pagan literature, and conquer for Holy Scriptures this disciple of the Pagan Muses, whose works hitherto had been his sole study. 'Do not imagine,' he writes, 'that the Apostles were simple and ignorant men, or be deterred by the absence of polish in their style. What! men talk of St. John as a rustic—as a fisherman! And yet what more sublime than the opening of his Gospel: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*"? The "Word"—that is the reason, the Great First Cause by whom everything exists, and all of which is contained in Christ. Plato had not this knowledge, and the eloquent Demosthenes was ignorant of it. . . . And as to the difficulties contained in the sacred text (he continues), a veil covers the face of God, and one cannot contemplate God's face without lifting it.' Then after giving him a general idea of Holy Writ, and sketching out the salient points in the different books, he concludes, 'I ask you, dearly beloved brother, whether to live among such things, to meditate assiduously upon them, to know, to seek only Divine truth, is not already heaven begun on earth? Do not take umbrage at the simplicity of the sacred text, which is simple on purpose to be understood by the poor and humble; while at the same time it contains deep meanings fit for the greatest minds. As for me, I do not flatter myself with the idea of knowing and understanding everything, or fancying I can gather all the fruits of a tree of which the roots are in heaven; but I own that that is my most earnest wish. I have only made the first steps; I gladly come forward to help one who has not yet begun. I do not set myself up as a master, but only as a companion.'

To this advice, which only referred to Paulinus's in-

tellectual tastes, Jerome added another and a graver one as regarded his soul—that there is no real progress to be made in the Christian life without detachment and sacrifice. Paulinus had begun by stripping himself of a portion of his worldly goods. Jerome advises him to persevere in this path. 'Make haste,' he writes; 'and if a strong cable still fastens your boat to the shore, do not wait to untie it, but cut the knot at once. He who renounces the world is indifferent to the sale of goods which he despises. Having food and raiment, let us, as Christians, be therewith content. Do you fear, by putting off to a later day the sacrifice which you have resolved upon, on the plea of getting a larger sum from the purchaser, that Christ should not have enough to feed His poor? Know, besides, that we have not given all to God till we have given ourselves. To be detached from everything, what is needful? One thing only: to remember that we must die some day.'[1]

Paulinus hastened to put in practice these wise counsels. He lost no time in selling his possessions and giving their value to the poor. 'He opened his granaries to the hungry and destitute,' writes an old author, 'clothed the naked, released the prisoners, freed the debtors from their creditors, dried the tears of others, and filled all hearts with joy.' He did more: with the consent of his wife he became a priest; and as Jerome and Paula went to bide their saintly lives by the manger of Jesus Christ, so Paulinus and Theresa took refuge close to the tomb of the martyr St. Felix, at Nola, in Campania, which was part of their own property. They visited Rome on their way, and there formed a warm friendship with those souls so closely connected with

[1] Totum Deo dedit qui seipsum obtulit. . . . Facile contemnit omnia, qui se cogitat semper esse moriturum.—*Epist.* 53, *Ad Paulinum.*

Paula, Paulinus with Pammachius, Theresa with Marcella, and the rest of that holy band of Paula's friends.

Scarcely were they arrived at Nola than a fresh messenger appeared at Bethlehem, bearing presents and letters for the solitaries, and a 'Panegyric on the Emperor Theodosius,' written by Paulinus but not yet published, which he submitted for Jerome's approval. In his letter Paulinus again humbly asked for guidance. 'Was he to devote himself to the apostolic life, or to prefer the humility of solitude and the monastic life which he had begun at Nola?'

Jerome was touched and confused at his confidence. 'Brother,' he exclaims, 'in what way have I deserved to be sought by a man like yourself, or to be lauded by a mouth which has just so worthily sung the praises of our great Christian Prince? Do not esteem us in proportion to our years. White hairs do not make wisdom; wisdom, on the contrary, takes the place of white hairs.'

But even in spite of his humility, the great director reappears. The brilliant disciple of Ausonius was not yet familiarised with the sacred books, and this appeared in his panegyric, in spite of its eloquence. 'Happy indeed is the Emperor,' exclaims Jerome, 'to have had you as his orator. You have illustrated his purple, you have consecrated his memory for the future. Oh, if I might lead a genius like yours, not to the summits of Helicon, as the poets say, but to the sacred heights of Sion, of Thabor, of Sinai! If I could guide you by the hand through the mysteries of the Prophets we should soon see the birth of something which learned Greece would envy! Yes; you have a fertile genius, a rich and easy abundance of thought, a mind as solid as it is just. To this solidity, to this eloquence, if you would only add

the study of Holy Scriptures, you would soon attain to the highest rank amongst us. . . . You ask me to tell you as a brother in what path you should walk. *I should like to see nothing of mediocrity about you. I should like that everything in you should be great, eminent and perfect.*'[1]

He advises him, consequently, to make up his mind as to the aim he has in view, and then resolutely to follow it. If he wishes to become a monk, then let him be thoroughly alone, detached, 'following naked a naked cross.'[2] 'Every mode of life,' he writes, 'has its models. Generals have Camillus, Regulus, the Scipios; philosophers, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle; poets, Homer, Virgil, Menander, Terence; historians, Thucydides and Sallust, Herodotus and Titus Livius; orators, Lysias and the Gracchi, Demosthenes and Cicero. Bishops and priests have the example of the Apostles and apostolic men: inheritors of their mission, they should be equally so of their virtues. We monks have for models Paul and Antony, Hilarion and Macarius; and, to go back still further, Elijah and Elisha, and the sons of the prophets who inhabited the deserts. Do you wish to perform sacerdotal or episcopal functions? Then go and live in towns and save souls, as you would yourself be saved. But if you prefer a monastic life, well, be a monk; fly from cities; seek solitude; cast your riches at the feet of the Apostles, and teach the world how to despise the goods of this world. . . . Your food should be simple bread, vegetables, and sometimes fish.' He concludes with the words, 'Salute Theresa from us both —she who, once your wife and now your sister, is fight-

[1] Nihil in te mediocre esse contentus sum. Totum summum, totum perfectum desidero.—*Epist.* 53, *Ad Paulinum.*

[2] Nudus sequi nudam crucem.—*Ibid.*

ing, like you, the glorious battle for God.' This letter confirmed Paulinus in his resolution to fly from ecclesiastical honours, and to build a monastery (which he afterwards accomplished) near the tomb of the martyr Felix.

But another guest who still more rejoiced Paula's heart was the venerable Bishop Epiphanius, who was looked upon by all the Bethlehem communities as a Father, and who had so greatly strengthened her original resolution to leave Rome. Epiphanius was himself the founder of the monastery of Ad, near Eleutheropolis, not far from Bethlehem, of which he had always kept the direction, though he could only visit it from time to time. This old disciple of Hilarius was delighted with all he saw at Bethlehem. The perfect order of the monasteries, the fervour of the virgins, the austerity of the monks, the prodigious intellectual activity displayed by both, filled him with an astonishment which he did not care to conceal. Jerome was never weary of singing the praises of Paula. He told the bishop of her zeal for the Holy Scriptures, of her wonderful humility, of her inexhaustible charity, and her incredible austerities; while Paula was enchanted to renew that intercourse with Epiphanius which had so greatly charmed her at Rome and Salamis.

She and Jerome took advantage of his presence to try and arrange an affair which had hitherto always fallen through. They had but two priests in their monastery, Jerome and Vincentius; and by an invincible feeling of humility, neither one nor the other would offer up the Adorable Sacrifice. It was, however, very necessary for both communities to have a priest who should celebrate the Divine mysteries, and all the Brothers pointed to Jerome's younger brother Paulinus as the most worthy of this honour. But his fears exceeded

even those of his brother, and the Bishop of Jerusalem had in vain tried to make him consent to be ordained. Epiphanius was consequently implored to do his best to overcome Paulinus's resistance; but did not succeed at that time, greatly to the regret of Paula and Jerome, who were obliged, in consequence, to have recourse to the Bethlehem priests on all occasions.

It was during this visit of Epiphanius to Bethlehem that, in the midst of the July heats, Paula fell dangerously ill. A terrible fever consumed her, and symptoms of dropsy supervened, which made the doctors think it necessary that she should substitute wine for water. Jerome told her their opinion, but in spite of the gravity of her state, Paula would not hear of such a relaxation in her rule. Jerome thinking that she would perhaps listen more readily to Epiphanius, brought him to her cell, when the venerable bishop urged her strongly on this point. Paula listened with respect to his words; but, seeing through Jerome's ruse, she replied, smiling, 'Oh, I know very well who has put that idea into your head. It is not you who are speaking.' And when Epiphanius came back to Jerome's monastery, and Jerome exclaimed, 'Well, have you succeeded?' 'Quite the contrary,' replied Epiphanius; 'she has almost persuaded an old man like me never to taste wine again.' 'I mention this,' writes St. Jerome, 'not that one ought to do things beyond one's strength, but to show to what a pitch this holy woman carried her courage and mortification, thirsting only for God on this earth.'

We shall meet Epiphanius again in Paula's monasteries; but things will have changed. Stormy clouds, which had been silently gathering, were about to burst upon Jerome and Paula, and their monasteries had seen the last of their bright days.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TROUBLES CAUSED BY ORIGENISM IN ST. PAULA'S MONASTERIES.

(394–395.)

THE glory which surrounded Paula's monastery left the convent at the Mount of Olives rather in the shade. Ruffinus was not unknown in the Church. The writings he composed in his studious retreat were not without merit and success. But his name paled before the great one of his friend. Was this the original cause, though a distant one, of the quarrel which, from the weakness of the human heart, soon after broke out between Ruffinus and Jerome, and which had such sad consequences for Paula? And did their noble emulation in the same work degenerate on Ruffinus's side to jealousy of Jerome's fame?

Whatever may have been the cause, a cloud of misunderstanding had already risen up between the two friends. Jerome's return to the profane authors, and the lectures he gave in his school displeased Ruffinus, although he had permitted his monks to copy some of the manuscripts for Jerome. But he disapproved more especially of the great work to which Jerome was devoting all his time—that Latin translation of the Bible from the Hebrew text. His visits to Bethlehem became more and more rare. An open rupture was imminent. Origen-

ism was its occasion; and we will, therefore, here give some details of Origen himself and his doctrines.

Origen is undoubtedly one of the most wonderful geniuses of the Church of the first centuries, and one whose name was greater than any other, both while he was alive and after his death; but his life was mingled with alternate triumphs and trials. The object at the same time of the warmest enthusiasm and the deepest aversion, finding apologists among martyrs and saints, and yet meeting at the same time with detractors and enemies among others equally deserving the title, this man seemed destined to rouse amongst his contemporaries the most passionate admiration or the most violent hatred. Placed, at the age of eighteen, at the head of the most celebrated of the schools, he dazzled his hearers by his eloquence and knowledge; disciples flocked to his classes from all parts of the world; bishops, saints, doctors, martyrs, philosophers of all kinds came out of his school; heretics dreaded him; even Pagan philosophers declared him to be their master. The faithful bear this testimony to his merits, that, since the days of the Apostles, no man had appeared in the Church fit to be compared with him. But all of a sudden his glory becomes troubled; he falls under the shafts of envy; he is driven from the school which he alone had made famous; the Church in Egypt rejects him; the bishops of distant provinces approve of his condemnation; and it is with difficulty that he can find in a remote corner of the East a shelter for his old age. But then, persecuted, misunderstood, and unhappy, he shows himself greater than ever in his glory and prosperity. Condemned by the Church, he remains always faithful to her; driven from his school, he carries his learning and his teaching to all parts of the earth. He flies from Greece to Arabia,

from Cappadocia to Palestine, leaving, wherever he goes, a bright ray of light. Indefatigable with his pen, he continually gives to the world writings full of sound doctrine; yet he is considered by some as the corrupter of Christianity; and in the last years of his life he has the double honour of suffering for the faith, of being thrown into a dungeon as the most formidable defender of the new religion, and of answering the most serious attack which had as yet been made against Christianity by the most triumphant apology. He dies at last without having been able to obtain the reversal of the sentence which had condemned him; he dies, and the divisions to which his name had given rise are perpetuated in the Church; he is defended and attacked in turn with the greatest ardour. Three centuries later emperors and councils will fulminate decrees against his name and works. Such was the strange and sad destiny of this great man.

The reason was that, in spite of his extraordinary genius, his wonderful eloquence, and his vast erudition, or perhaps on account of these very things, the errors into which his brilliant mind had led him, and which his immense renown covered with all his prestige, formed a grave danger for the faith of the Church. Origen possessed all the science of his age—grammar, rhetoric, geometry, astronomy; and all these were but a preparation to philosophy; and philosophy itself, as he conceived it, found its completion and its crown in the superior height of Divine revelation, at the foot of which he laid all human science. Adding to his extraordinary knowledge an enormous amount of labour, his work was truly colossal. We have already spoken of his admirable criticism on the text and translations of Holy Writ. His own writings consisted chiefly of Commentaries on

the Scriptures or Homilies, in which his genius developed itself freely, by a method of interpretation which, though large and grand, was likewise allegorical and full of danger. He then wrote a famous book on 'Principles,' in which his chief errors were found; and finally his 'Treatise against Celsus,' which was far more orthodox, and which laid down the finest basis of Christian apology. The great principle of Origen's teaching (as had been that of Clement, his master, and all the Alexandrian school) was the union of science and faith, founded on the harmony of reason and revelation—a harmony which he endeavoured to bring out in all his writings. Unfortunately, in its application he went beyond the principle, and instead of proving the agreement between philosophic doctrines and the Church's dogmas, he tried to make the dogmas agree with the philosophy.

Thus, impressed with the Platonic ideas of the pre-existence of souls, of the purely medicinal character of pain, and other like theories, he fell into theological errors when dealing with the origin of man, the resurrection of the body, the Incarnation, and the future state. In these mistakes originated all the misfortunes of his life. They convulsed the Church long after his death. Arianism enlarged upon them, and tried to shelter itself under Origen's great name. They prevailed at that time in Egypt, where the great Alexandrian doctor had such warm admirers; and they came to bring trouble and distress into Paula's monasteries, and to break up the friendship between Jerome and Ruffinus—a friendship which had lasted for twenty-five years, and which all the world knew.

One can easily imagine the enthusiasm with which Origen's genius inspired Jerome when he arrived, still young, in the East, and the works of this wonderful

man were first put into his hands. His universal science, his prodigious labours, and his innumerable writings filled him with an admiration which he did not hesitate to proclaim at Rome, and with which he tried equally to impress Pope Damasus. He knew of the theories which some people imputed to Origen, but he distinguished between his errors and his genius; and if he believed in the harmony between reason and faith, and thought, with Origen, that it was lawful to 'spoil the Egyptians' for the benefit of Israel (that is, to make use of profane science in the elucidation of Divine mysteries), he knew also when to stop; and, so far from following the bold Alexandrian doctor in his adventurous conceptions, he stuck doggedly to the dogmas of the Roman Church as his sheet anchor. With this reservation Jerome did not think it necessary to deprive himself of the treasures of science contained in Origen's writings, and all the more as his errors had been publicly exposed and refuted; so that at Bethlehem, as at Rome, he continued to read, to translate, and to draw largely from his works.

It was not the same with Ruffinus. During his long residence in Egypt he had become a passionate admirer of Origen, whose glory was still fresh in the minds of his countrymen; and he had given himself the task of popularising his works in the West. But he had not been able, like Jerome, to detect and avoid his errors. On the contrary, his somewhat cold and systematic spirit had attached itself obstinately to Origen's theories; and these ideas had taken the shape of positive doctrine. Not only had he fallen into these errors himself, but he had put them into the mind of the young Bishop of Jerusalem, over whom he had acquired immense influence.

These unhappy divisions had lately been revived in

Egypt, and troubled the whole Alexandrian Church, from whence they quickly spread to Jerusalem. An obscure person whom history calls Aterbius, a furious opponent of Origen's, came to the Holy City, and seeing Jerome and Ruffinus each occupied, in their different ways, in translating his works under the very eyes and protection of the bishop, accused them all three of Origenism in the face of the whole Church. The sensation produced in Jerusalem by this accusation was immense, and the known admiration of both for Origen gave an appearance of truth to the charge. Orthodoxy for a Doctor of the Church is like purity to a virgin: it must not be suspected. Jerome, with his fiery nature, hastened indignantly to repel the charge. This act was natural but impolitic, when one considers the dispositions of the Bishop of Jerusalem and of Ruffinus, who were determined not to answer a man who had no right, according to them, to ask them to give an account of their faith. But Jerome was not a man for cold calculations. Ruffinus seized the occasion to blacken him with the bishop: for Jerome to speak when the bishop and himself held their tongues was to separate himself from them, and to condemn their silence. It was not only perfidious, but mean, according to Ruffinus—for Jerome thought as they did on the subject of Origen; he therefore lied, or was a renegade. These things, insinuated with great bitterness by Ruffinus, irritated the bishop to the greatest degree; and thus Jerome forfeited his good opinion. But in reality Jerome had never had any of the motives imputed to him by Ruffinus. His faith was attacked, and he thought it a simple and right thing to defend it —that was all. But the bishop's anger was not what wounded him the most. He had just made a discovery which he had obstinately refused to believe before—that

his oldest and dearest friend, Ruffinus, had betrayed him. He to whom he had written once, on hearing of the arrival of Ruffinus in Egypt, 'Oh, if our Lord would lead me towards thee, as Habacuc was transported towards Daniel, how my arms would press thee to my heart! how my lips would cover thee with kisses! Ah! how I feel what it is to be ill! Otherwise, neither the summer heats nor the perils of the sea could keep me back! With less ardour would a pilot, tossed to and fro by storms, sigh for the port! With less impatience would a mother, seated on the shore, wait for her only son!'—Had Ruffinus ever loved him? 'For,' exclaimed Jerome, with bitterness, 'a friendship which could thus abandon a friend and turn against him, was it ever sincere?'[1] He could not bear up against such a sorrow. It quite exhausted the strength which fasting had already weakened, and a long and dangerous illness was the consequence. Such is human nature. One may try, in vain, to harden one's heart by austerities and detachment; the renunciation which solitude involves does not dry up the source of human affections. They subsist, purer, stronger, strengthened even by the sacrifice of all that life holds most dear. But when, all of a sudden, this last consolation fails us—a consolation which one has not renounced because God has not asked it of us—when this last illusion is dispelled, there comes a sort of revulsion in hearts as tender as Jerome's, and an agony under which nature itself gives way, and serious illness follows. This sickness in Jerome's case lasted for several months, and it was not till the end of Lent of this year (394) that he began to get better.

Paula herself was deeply grieved at this event, of

[1] Amicitia quæ desinere potest, vera nunquam fuit.—*Epist.* 1, *Ad Ruffinum.*

which she foresaw the serious bearing on the peace of her monasteries. A question of doctrine lay at the bottom of it all, on which, she felt, Jerome could not temporise nor Ruffinus yield. Thus, this peace which she had come so far to seek—this liberty to serve God in greater freedom—which had cost her such bitter sacrifice, was escaping from her. War had entered her peaceful Bethlehem; and what would be the end of it?

We are coming now to one of the most serious struggles through which the Church passed in the fourth century. Paula, in spite of herself, was drawn into the strife, and suffered much; but her merits were only thereby enhanced.

The return of St. Epiphanius to Jerusalem produced the first explosion. The news of the reappearance of Origenism in the Holy City induced him to come back. As an old athlete of the faith, and an indefatigable adversary of all heresy, Epiphanius had a particular horror of Origenism, and a special dread of these peculiar doctrines. An account of the denunciation by Aterbius had reached him in Cyprus, and he hastened to Jerusalem to ascertain the truth. He arrived at Easter, and was received, as usual, by Bishop John. But, in spite of the precautions used both by Ruffinus and the young bishop, Epiphanius detected their leanings towards Origenism. He thought it his duty, in a paternal way, to warn them of their danger. 'One cannot be too careful,' he exclaimed; 'Origen was the precursor and father of Arius.' On Easter Day Bishop John invited Epiphanius to speak to the people in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. An enormous crowd filled the church, not only from the solemnity of the feast, but also from curiosity to hear and see the most famous bishop of the East. Epiphanius spoke openly of that which was in every one's thoughts,

and boldly exposed the errors of Origenism. During his sermon Bishop John and those around him openly testified their disapprobation. At last the Bishop of Jerusalem, not being able to bear it any longer, sent the vicar-general to Epiphanius to beg him to stop. From the Church of St. Athanasius they went to that of the Holy Cross, which was only separated from it by an atrium surrounded by porches. During this passage the crowd thronged round the venerable Epiphanius, kissing his hands and his robe, and preventing his progress. The vexation of the Bishop of Jerusalem knew no bounds, and he did not hesitate to exclaim 'that the haughty old man was stopping on purpose, in order to curry favour with the mob;' and he called out loudly to him to 'come quickly.'[1] In the evening there was catechetical instruction, on which occasion the bishop addressed the catechumens who had been baptised the day before. The crowd was greater than ever, hoping to hear Epiphanius once more. But this time the Bishop of Jerusalem preached. He did it on purpose. He began by summing up all the catechetical instructions he had given during Lent; then turning suddenly towards the Bishop Epiphanius, and markedly addressing him, he began, with his head thrown back, his eyes flaming, and trembling with passion, a furious attack on what was then called Anthropomorphism, a coarse kind of heresy, which, pushing to excess a literal interpretation of Holy Writ, ascribed to God a face and body like ours, and which was constantly attributed by the partisans of Origen to their adversaries. Epiphanius remained calm and impassible during this attack; but when the Bishop of Jerusalem had ceased speaking he rose with great

[1] *Epist.* 38, *Ad Pammachium. Adversus Johannem Hierosolymitanum.*

dignity, and bowing to the crowd, said gravely, 'All that John, my brother in dignity, my son in age, has just said to you against the heresy of the Anthropomorphites is according to truth, and I entirely agree with him. But if it be just that we should condemn this error, it is equally just that we should expose and refute the impious doctrines of Origen.' The cheers of the whole multitude with which these words were received (according to the somewhat noisy and tumultuous custom of the ancient Church) were a bitter mortification to John, who felt that the effect of his own sermon had been done away with; and in his heart there rankled the dart of wounded pride, which did not fail to bring forth evil fruit. Saddened by a triumph for which he had not sought, Epiphanius hastened to leave Jerusalem and arrive at Bethlehem, where he was eagerly expected. He dismayed Jerome and Paula by his account of the scene he had just witnessed; and with one accord they conjured him to return to Jerusalem and make one last effort to avert the threatened danger. Epiphanius went, but had to return that very night; the only result of his charity being a conviction of the determined obstinacy and implacable resentment of the Bishop of Jerusalem.

The stay of Epiphanius at Bethlehem, under these circumstances, was necessarily short; and after a few days the Bishop of Salamis took leave of Paula and Jerome, and retired to his monastery near Eleutheropolis. Hence he wrote a touching and beautiful confidential letter to Bishop John, which he sent to Jerusalem by one of his own priests; but he received no answer.[1] John's irritation against Epiphanius and his Bethlehem friends was too deeply seated, and unfortunately Epiphanius

[1] Mittit tibi per clericum suum epistolam, responsionem flagitat: aces.—*Epist.* 38, *Ad Pammachium.*

himself, most unintentionally, furnished him with a plausible pretext for revenge, and complicated the doctrinal question by a conflict of jurisdiction.

It happened that Paulinus, Jerome's younger brother, had been sent on some business to Epiphanius, and the venerable bishop resolved to take the opportunity to ordain him. He knew how much Jerome and Paula wished for this, and how essential it was for the welfare of the Bethlehem community; so, without dreaming that this ordination would give offence to the Bishop of Jerusalem, who had himself often pressed Paulinus to be ordained, Epiphanius resolved to overcome his scruples; and one day when he was offering the Holy Sacrifice in the church adjoining his monastery, he desired his deacons to seize Jerome's brother, and forcibly consecrated him deacon; and the next day, while the new deacon was serving him in that capacity, he again had him seized and ordained priest; after which he sent him back to Jerome, who had never dreamt of such a thing, delighted at having thus overcome the difficulty, and only surprised that his brothers at Bethlehem had not suggested that he should take advantage of Paulinus's visit to accomplish their joint wishes. This was a glorious opportunity for his enemies at Jerusalem. An ordination by Epiphanius was an irregularity of which Bishop John hastened to take advantage. He attacked it on two grounds: first, as contrary to the canons—Paulinus not being quite thirty; and next, as infringing on his rights as bishop of the diocese. He filled the East and West with his complaints; and then, passing from complaints to violent measures, he forbade the priests at Bethlehem to allow Paulinus to enter either into the Church of the Nativity or the Grotto, *or any one who chose to consider him as a priest.* This was setting all Bethlehem on fire, where

the monasteries, which had been the blessing of the country, were beloved by all; but to Paula and her community, who could not disavow the act of St. Epiphanius, the blow was crushing. Paula had left all for this Sacred Grotto. 'This shall be my rest for ever!' she had exclaimed. And now she found it closed to her. Heretics and Pagans could freely enter in; only Jerome and Paula and their communities would be excluded!

Their conduct in this terrible storm was full, at the same time, of prudence and of firmness. It was impossible to condemn the Bishop of Salamis by refusing to Paulinus the title of priest; but they agreed that he should rigorously abstain from all sacerdotal functions. They did more: they sent him away. Jerome consented to separate himself from his cherished brother, and sent him back to Epiphanius, with whom he remained, only visiting Bethlehem as a pilgrim from time to time. But this departure, whereby Jerome had thought to propitiate the bishop, only exasperated him the more; Paulinus, he affirmed, belonged to him, and he insisted on his return. On this point, however, neither Paula nor Jerome would yield. The independence of their monasteries was at stake. On no account would Jerome consent to alienate the liberty of his monks, or make them a portion of the secular clergy. 'What!' he exclaimed; 'when I was myself ordained, against my will, the bishop heard these words from my mouth: "Be it so, provided it do not deprive me of that for which I have given up both home and country." Paulinus, who was compelled to submit, like me, to ordination, may he not hold the same language?'

It was the great and delicate question as to whether the monks of Bethlehem did or did not form part of the Jerusalem clergy.

Epiphanius tried once more to intervene, and wrote another letter, which is still extant, to the Bishop of Jerusalem, and which is one of the most admirable models of sweetness and humility, mingled with episcopal firmness.

He first explained simply and openly the circumstances and causes of the ordination in question, proving the good faith of Jerome and himself, and their perfect innocence of an attempt to infringe upon any diocesan rights. He had only done what he had himself willingly allowed in Cyprus to other neighbouring bishops; Paulinus himself was a stranger, as also the territory where the ordination took place. Above all he protested against any other motive being imputed to them but one of charity; and in the name of charity and for the good of souls he conjured the Bishop of Jerusalem to revoke his harsh orders. And then, passing to the real motive of this severity, he exclaimed, 'O my brother! do not let us have one word on our lips and another thought in our hearts;' adding an entreaty 'that he would abjure that fatal heresy.' But this letter had no more effect than the preceding one. Epiphanius then considered it was his duty to enlighten public opinion, and to demonstrate clearly what were the errors taught by the Bishop of Jerusalem, which he reduced to eight heads, among which were the following: That souls, before being imprisoned in the body, dwelt with celestial beings; that the body would not resuscitate with the soul; that the soul, rejecting the fleshly tunic (for thus Origen spoke of the body given by God to Adam in the Book of Genesis), would reascend to heaven, from whence it came down; that damnation was to be understood in a limited sense, and would not last for ever; that the devil himself would see the end of his punishment and be restored to his

place among the angels. We see by this the importance of the subjects in dispute. Epiphanius demanded that the monasteries should suspend their communion with Bishop John until he should recant his errors.

Epiphanius's epistle was received with veneration throughout Palestine. At Bethlehem, Paula adopted the following wise line of conduct: that Jerome should shut himself up in absolute silence on the question of doctrine, as regarded the bishop; [and she restrained him, in fact, in this way for three years;] that they should still hold communion with the Bethlehem clergy, but that they should abstain from direct communication with the bishop himself until the clouds which had obscured his faith should be dispelled. In spite of this great moderation, John's fury, fanned by Ruffinus, knew no bounds, and broke forth in fresh violence. All ecclesiastical functions were forbidden to Jerome and Vincentius. A large number of catechumens had been prepared for baptism in their monasteries: when Jerome presented them at Easter to the Bethlehem priests, these latter were forbidden to receive them, and Jerome had to take them to Lydda for baptism, where the bishop was Jerome's particular friend. Soon after, during the feast of Pentecost, Bethlehem was visited by a terrible earthquake, and other catechumens implored, in their terror, for the laver of regeneration; but again the Bethlehem clergy were compelled to refuse them. The bishop's wrath extended even to the dead. He commanded them to be refused ecclesiastical rites at their burial, as to excommunicated persons; and so the two communities, not daring to bury their dead in unconsecrated ground, were compelled to leave them exposed to wind and weather. As for Paula, struck down by a storm which she had done her best to avert, and entangled in a quarrel the most

contrary to her love of peace and silence, she suffered terribly, though without a murmur, from the spiritual privations imposed upon her monasteries, but waited patiently for the moment when the justice of God should interfere to quell the injustice of men. The hotter the contention around her grew, the more did she shut herself up in prayers and tears, and the devout meditation of the Holy Scriptures. Jerome had given her a rule of life which was at once wise and consoling; and that was to abstain from all controversy; to hold fast to the anchor of the Roman faith; and to let the polemical floods beat against her without troubling herself with their tumult or violence. But the heretics would not let her alone. One of them, a bosom friend of Ruffinus and Bishop John's, having been admitted as a pilgrim into her hospital and received by the noble Roman herself, adroitly turned the conversation on the points in dispute, especially on the question of the pre-existence of souls; and he pressed his views with such subtlety that her faith was, for a moment, not overthrown, but troubled—so great is the peril, even for earnest minds, to discuss certain questions with certain people; and so true is it that faith, like purity, is a delicate virtue, which must be guarded with jealous care! Jerome's indignation was very great when he heard of this attempt. He at once sought out the heretic, and provoking a discussion on the point in question, put certain precise questions to him, to which he demanded categorical answers. The man (who was supposed to be Palladius) endeavoured in vain to elude his arguments, and Jerome overwhelmed him with such a flood of scriptural evidence and powerful logic, that neither Palladius nor any one else ever tried the experiment again. Palladius conceived the bitterest hatred against Jerome in consequence; but Paula's

merits had so greatly struck him, that in one of his books[1] he bears this testimony to her virtue: 'This noble Roman lady had a soul the most fitted to understand the mysteries of the spiritual life and to rise to the heights of perfection, but she was hindered by a certain Dalmatian, called Jerome'! Heresy having failed to touch Paula, or to shake her faith, revenged itself by attacking her virtue, which was too remarkable in every way not to provoke envy. A certain personage, to whom, among themselves, Jerome had given the name of 'Adad the Idumean' (the persecutor of Solomon), was specially bitter against her. Her least actions, her simplest words, were turned into ridicule. She was represented as being completely under the influence of Jerome, 'a man the most jealous and tyrannical of all human beings;' and that she never dared act or even think contrary to his will. They went even beyond this, turning against her her mortifications and her very charities. 'Poor woman!' they exclaimed, 'she no longer knows what she is about. She has ruined her health and spent all her money; she is killing herself. Her fasts and excessive watchings have driven her mad; she ought to be put under "surveillance."' And there were plenty of officious people who were delighted to repeat these agreeable things to her, under pretence of kindness.

Nothing tended more than these trials to prove the solidity and sincerity of her faith. Her unalterable serenity, her incomparable humility, and her wonderful patience raised her above all these minor miseries into a region where the clouds were dispersed by the light of God's presence, and the things of earth appeared in

[1] Paula Romana ad vitam ex virtute gerendam optimo ingenio prædita. Sed huic impedimento fuit Hieronymus quidam Dalmata.—*Historia Lausiaca, de Opiniano.*

their true littleness. In vain, therefore, did envy and calumny try to malign her out of doors. Nothing disturbed her recollection or her deep peace in God. Not a word or a sign betrayed the least emotion: her nature seemed to have lost that extreme sensitiveness which causes such suffering even to the most detached souls. It was in the Holy Scriptures that she found her consolation and strength. The incomparable words of the Divine Text had been so long meditated and dwelt upon by Paula, that they had, as it were, passed into her very being, and came back to her mind and to her life on every occasion. They were like an armour, shielding her from every danger and difficulty.[1] Whilst Jerome sprang up like a wounded lion at every fresh shaft of calumny, Paula, always calm and gentle, soothed and consoled him by her holy and loving words, and healed the wounds which his enemies had inflicted.

Sometimes she would quote that passage in Deuteronomy which points out so clearly the hidden meaning of trials: 'The Lord your God hath tried you to see if you really love Him with all your heart and soul;' or else those powerful words of Isaiah: 'Them that are weaned from the milk, that are drawn away from the breasts, expect tribulation on tribulation, hope against hope, ... expect this, in this transitory life, from the malice of the lips and the perfidy of tongues.' And she would add this commentary to the words: 'By those who have been weaned, the prophet means all creatures arrived at the age of reason; but if, as he implies, all men must suffer tribulation, because it is the condition of those who serve God here below, remark, too, that it is also in that very tribulation that we must place

[1] His testimoniis quasi armaturâ Dei, adversus omnia quidem vitia, sed præcipue instruebat se contra invidiam.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

our hope.' And commenting upon those consoling words of St. Paul, she added, 'Remember that tribulation produces patience; and patience itself is a trial, from whence arises hope, and a hope which shall not be confounded.'

What prevents our feeling these consolations of hope, men of little faith that we are, is the distant fulfilment of these promises; and so Paula would constantly quote those beautiful words of Holy Writ: 'While we look not on the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' 'And do not let us exclaim,' she would add, 'that the time is so long; we shall soon receive help from our Lord; for hath He not said, "I will hear thee at the appointed time, and in the day of salvation I will succour thee"? Patience is, after all, the greatest wisdom. He who has not strength to be patient is a fool.'[1] There were moments when it required all Paula's admirable patience and command of temper not to be provoked. One day a person came up to her and told her that at Jerusalem every one said that her brain was affected.[2] Jerome was indignant at this insolence, but Paula answered with her usual sweetness, 'Yes, we are fools for Jesus Christ; but this folly is wiser than the wisdom of men.' And then added, turning to Jerome, 'Do we not read in the Gospel that our Saviour was considered a madman? Did not the Jews call Him a Samaritan and one who had a devil? Ought we to be better treated than He was? Has He not told us that the world would hate us because

[1] Patiens vir multum prudens. Qui autem pusillanimis est, vehementer insipiens.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

[2] Novi susurronem quemdam quasi benevolum nuntiasse quod pro nimio fervore virtutum quibusdam videretur insana, et cerebrum illius dicerent confovendum.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.*

we were not of the world?' And then turning towards God, she exclaimed, 'O my God! Thou knowest the secrets of all hearts. It is for Thee that we have been mortified all the day long, and looked upon as sheep prepared for the slaughter. But Thou, O Lord, art our help and our strength, and I do not fear what men may do unto us.'

Thus Holy Writ furnished her with an answer to everything, and trials only brought to light the treasures of humility, patience, gentleness, strength, holy hope, and strong faith which she had silently amassed by years of penitence and prayer.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CONTINUATION OF TROUBLE CAUSED BY ORIGENISM—FABIOLA AT BETHLEHEM—PEACE.

(395–397.)

Who was this 'Adad the Idumean,' who was the foremost among Paula's enemies? It is thought that Ruffinus was the person in question, and all the more because at that time an odious act of perfidy on his part aggravated the difficulties of Paula's position at Bethlehem. The letter which Epiphanius had written to the Bishop of Jerusalem was in Greek. One of the monks who did not understand Greek (Eusebius of Cremona) asked Jerome to translate it into Latin, which Jerome did, on the express condition that the translation was to be for himself only. For eighteen months it remained, accordingly, in Eusebius's cell; then Ruffinus got wind of it, and induced one of his agents by a heavy bribe to steal it; and once in possession of the letter, he hastened to take advantage of it. Jerome, writing only for an intimate friend, had not been very careful to translate every syllable, and had sometimes substituted one epithet for another. This enabled Ruffinus to traduce Jerome to the bishop as a forger; and so greatly exasperated the latter against him that he determined, as he said, 'to make an end of this man Jerome once and for ever;' and this is the way he set about doing it.

There was at this time at Constantinople another Ruffinus, more formidable than the priest of the Mount of Olives, prefect of the prætorium and tutor of the young Arcadius, celebrated in history for his ambition and insatiable cupidity; and at this moment he coveted nothing less than the empire itself, and had, consequently, an interest in gaining the favour of the Oriental bishops. John sent emissaries to this man to purchase a decree of banishment against Jerome, which he succeeded in obtaining, money not being wanting for the purpose. At this blow Jerome was roused to the utmost indignation.

'What!' he exclaimed, 'a bishop who has himself been a monk threatens to send monks into exile! He does not then know that this race is one which does not yield to fear, and that when the sword is offered to it, instead of pushing it away, it simply bows its head. To a monk who has no country but heaven, is not the whole world a place of exile? No; there is no need of expense, or imperial rescripts, or emissaries to the further end of the earth. Let him touch us with the tip of his finger, and we shall depart. The earth is the Lord's, and all that is therein, and Christ is nowhere a prisoner.' [1]

Thus, weary with all this strife, he wished to start at once, without waiting for the execution of the rescript. With this intention he went to find Paula, and the scene between them was touching in the extreme. 'Let us fly,' exclaimed Jerome,' and let their mad envy triumph. Jacob fled from Esau, and David from Saul.' Paula had not less detachment than Jerome, but being more gentle, and knowing that it is in vain to try to escape such trials, she made him this beautiful answer: 'Yes, you would be in the right, and we should do well to fly, if the devil did not fight everywhere against the servants of God, and would not

[1] *Epist.* 39, *Ad Theophilum.*

precede us wherever we went. . . . They hate and wish to crush us; why not simply oppose patience to their hatred, and humility to their arrogance? They smite us on one cheek; why not turn the other to them? The apostle Paul, has he not written, "*Overcome evil with good*"? Were not the Apostles themselves rejoiced to suffer shame for the name of Jesus? And the Saviour Himself, did he not endure all things, even to the death of the cross? If Job had not fought and conquered, would he have received the crown of justice? or would he have heard from our Saviour's mouth the words, "Thinkest thou that I have proved thee for any other purpose than to show forth thy virtue?" Thus the Gospel proclaims those happy who suffer persecution for justice. When our conscience tells us that our sufferings are not the result of our sins, we may be quite sure that the sufferings of this present time are not to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.' Thus Paula raised Jerome's courage and soothed his impetuosity.

But the rescript, after all, had no effect. The Governor of Cæsarea, who was Metropolitan of Palestine, and a prudent and moderate man, did not hurry himself to put it into execution; and the death of Ruffinus, who was suddenly massacred by the soldiers at the very moment when he expected to ascend the imperial throne, delivered Jerome and the rest of the world. This peril passed, Paula encouraged him to devote himself more than ever to his great works on the Holy Scriptures, and to let the tempest growl as it would outside. From every quarter, in fact, entreaties reached Jerome for fresh translations or commentaries. The holy priest Desiderius implored him, from France, to translate the Pentateuch; his old Roman friends asked for the Book of Exodus; others for the rest of the minor prophets.

At last Jerome, though sad at heart and suffering from physical weakness, resumed his labours, and consecrated to them all the time which was left him by his hospitable cares. For pilgrims flocked to Bethlehem more than ever, and Jerome was sometimes overwhelmed by their numbers. 'Forgive me!' he writes at this time to the solitary at Nola, who complained of the shortness of his epistles, 'but the whole world seems to conspire to come to Bethlehem! The care of my guests does not leave me free for a moment; and as soon as a vessel is about to set sail from our nearest port, they besiege me so for letters, that no time will suffice to comply with their wishes.'

Paulinus, to whom this complaint was addressed, had continued to live with Theresa near the tomb of the martyr Felix; but he wished to join Jerome and Paula at the Holy Places, thinking that he should thereby find a quieter retreat. Jerome, however, dissuaded him, and advised him not to exchange his present solitude for Bethlehem, which was at that moment so troubled.

It was about this time that Jerome addressed one of his most admirable epistles to a young nephew of his friend Heliodorus, Nepotian, who, after having followed, like his uncle, a military career, had come into the Church, and thought of embracing the monastic state; but Heliodorus, burdened with the double weight of age and the episcopate, wished to keep Nepotian near him as a helper in his declining years. Jerome tries with a touching delicacy to preserve this support for his old friend by showing to Nepotian how one can best live as a priest. This letter, and that to Paulinus on the monastic life and to Eustochium on virginity, form a series of the most beautiful counsels which can be read on the great Christian virtues.

Whilst Jerome was thus occupied, a messenger suddenly arrived from Joppa to announce to Paula the unexpected visit of her old Roman friend Fabiola. She had carried on her active life of charity after Paula's departure, and Rome alone did not content her. She sought for God's poor in the most remote districts, even to the gorges of the Apennines, or in a little boat among the islands on the coasts of Italy. Faithful to Jerome's instructions, she went on with her study of Holy Scriptures. Yet how often did her thoughts turn to her old master and her devoted friends at Bethlehem! At last, not being able to resist the wish to see them once more, and with the secret hope of being able to remain with them altogether, she crossed the seas, and brought in her suite another old friend, the priest Oceanus, whom Jerome called his 'son.'

This visit was an immense joy to both parties. The old days on the Aventine were resumed with the reading of the books of Holy Writ under Jerome's auspices. The books of Moses, which he was then translating, and the Prophets, on which he was writing his commentaries, furnished the text of their instructions. Fabiola was as eager as ever in her questions. Jerome, writing of her later, exclaimed, 'I fancy I still see Fabiola with her intense ardour in the study of Holy Scriptures. It seemed as if she were trying to satisfy a hunger from which she had long suffered.' The happiness of monastic life was also the subject of their conversation; and Fabiola surprised and delighted Jerome by reciting to him one day his own letter to Heliodorus, in which he had so eloquently depicted the charms of life in the desert, and which she had learnt by heart.

Fabiola could not, of course, abstain from paying a visit to Melania and the convent on the Mount of Olives;

and Ruffinus did not let such an opportunity escape of trying to detach her and Oceanus from Paula and Jerome. He had just lamentably succeeded in this unworthy project with Vigilance, who had been previously received in Paula's hospital with the most delicate hospitality, and who, on his return to the West, had repaid her kindness by slanderous accusations. But Ruffinus failed altogether with Fabiola. Then he devised another plot whereby Oceanus found in his cell a manuscript, which a strange hand had placed there, full of the most malicious insinuations against Jerome. It was so much labour lost, however: Oceanus was only disgusted at the manœuvre; and Fabiola, so far from becoming suspicious of the Bethlehem convent, had determined to fix herself there for ever, when, all of a sudden, a sinister rumour spread like lightning through the East, which filled all the convents with terror.

It was said that the Huns, having been invited into the Empire by the treachery of Ruffinus, had spread all over the East, and menaced Jerusalem. The most terrible accounts were given of their barbarity. Neither rank, sex, nor age was spared: rivers of blood followed their path. They were then besieging Antioch, and were hurrying on to Jerusalem, attracted by the riches of the Holy City. Arabia, Phœnicia, Palestine, and Egypt were seized with terror. On all sides preparations were made for defence. Tyre cut her isthmus and isolated herself from the continent. Jerusalem repaired her walls, which had been neglected during a long peace.

In this terrible peril, Paula, to save her convent and its inmates from the insults of the barbarians, had no alternative but flight. She decided then to leave Bethlehem, though not without a terrible wrench, and retired to the sea-shore with her virgins. Jerome and his monks

followed her example and remained at Joppa, prepared to embark as soon as the barbarians should draw near, and 'trembling,' writes St. Jerome, 'less at the noise of the tempests which at that time lashed the Mediterranean, than at the continual dread of the arrival of the enemy.' Some time passed in these grave anxieties; but at last, news having come that the Huns had suddenly retraced their steps without having crossed the Lebanon range, Paula brought back her little colony joyfully to Bethlehem, where their thankfulness equalled their previous terrors. Fabiola, however, did not follow them. Frightened at the danger they had so narrowly escaped, she decided to return to Rome, where she quickly rivalled Pammachius in charity and good works. When the troubles in the Bethlehem monasteries had ceased, Jerome wrote to her, sending her the oral instructions he had given her on the meaning of the sacerdotal vestments of the Jewish priests; but not without reproaching her gently for her departure. 'You would not stay with us,' he complains; 'you feared fresh alarms, and say that you are now in peace. Well, I believe, in spite of that, you often sigh after Bethlehem in the midst of Babylon. We are now in peace too; and by the Manger, which has at last been given back to us, we hear again the plaintive cries of the "little Babe of Bethlehem," of which I send you the echo across the seas.'

But soon fresh troubles arose. From Alexandria arrived a messenger one day at the monastery, bearing a strange letter for the priest Vincentius. 'Here I am!' the writer exclaims, with Eastern hyperbole: 'Theophilus sends me; and as the wind dispels the smoke, and the fire melts the wax, so at my approach will the enemies of truth disappear. I shall make short work, you may be sure, of Jerome's follies!'

The surprise of the Bethlehem solitaries on the receipt of this letter may be imagined. The messenger had made a mistake; the letter was for the convent at the Mount of Olives, not for that at Bethlehem; and was meant for Ruffinus, and not for Vincentius. It was signed by a certain Isidore, a priest of Alexandria, and a particular friend of Ruffinus.

Isidore had evidently been chosen to intervene in the name of the patriarch between the Bishop of Jerusalem and the monks of Bethlehem. The matter had, therefore, been referred to Alexandria, and yet at Bethlehem they knew nothing about it! But why refer it to such a tribunal? Why not to the rightful authority, the Bishop of Cæsarea, Metropolitan of Palestine? or to the Patriarch of Antioch, Metropolitan of the East? It was easy to discover the reason. Every one at Jerusalem knew the leaning of the Patriarch of Alexandria towards Origenism, and they consequently wished to flatter and win him over to their side. If the choice of the judge was sufficiently disloyal, that of his representative was still worse, for the evident bias of Isidore's letter was revolting. 'What!' exclaimed Jerome, 'does he come as an ambassador or as an enemy? What right has the Bishop of Alexandria over Jerusalem? The Metropolitan of Palestine is at Cæsarea; that of the whole East at Antioch. The Canons of Nicea regulated this matter long ago.'

But Isidore had not yet left Alexandria when another mediator presented himself, an honest and enlightened man, to whom that decree for Jerome's banishment had been sent, which he had wisely suspended. This was Archelaus, Governor of Palestine, who had set his heart on appeasing a feud which was agitating the whole country.

Paula and Jerome welcomed this new mediator with

open arms. 'Peace!' exclaimed Jerome, 'who wishes for it more than we do? Is it not to enjoy this very peace that we have left our own country? But we want a real peace, not a lying one which conceals war; a peace of which truth and faith shall be the foundation.'

Nothing could be much more disagreeable to John, the Bishop of Jerusalem, than this intervention which came to spoil the plot he had so carefully contrived. He pretended, however, to accede to it. The hour and the day for the conference were fixed; Jerome and his monks arrived; for three consecutive days they waited for the Bishop of Jerusalem, who, on some miserable pretext or other, refused to appear. Finally Archelaus, in disgust, withdrew, and, immediately after, Isidore arrived.

This man understood his part of mediator in a very different manner. After repeated conferences with Ruffinus and the Bishop of Jerusalem, he came insolently to Bethlehem, with a pompous retinue, and accused Jerome of heresy, without even condescending to give him the title of priest. But he soon found with what manner of man he had to deal. Jerome stopped him at once with the simple question, 'If the Bishop of Alexandria has sent you to us, will you allow us to see his letters? For it is not usual for an ambassador to appear without showing his credentials.'

Isidore was forced to own that such as he had were left with the Bishop of Jerusalem; on which Jerome remarked later with a smile, 'It was difficult for this Hippocrates to cure us, as he had forgotten his plaisters and medicines!'

Passing over this irregularity, however, Isidore reduced his charges against the monks to one point: 'You were once in communion with Bishop John,' he said;

'then he could not be a heretic; or you are the same, unless you have calumniated him.'

'But,' replied Jerome, 'at that time we were ignorant of the fact. The letters of Epiphanius have revealed it to us. Can you admit that a man is not ill because once he was well?' The epigram was unanswerable, and Isidore hastened to go on to another point of debate —the ordination of Paulinus. 'Oh,' exclaimed Jerome, 'on that point there is no difficulty in coming to an understanding. But that is not the real point in dispute. We ask for a profession of faith, and it is denied us.' Then he repeated what he had previously said so often: that his monks and himself were perfectly ready to show every respect and deference to the Bishop, provided he left them their monastic liberty. Isidore reiterated his accusations, and finally drew up a long letter signed by the Bishop of Jerusalem, and concocted by him and Ruffinus, which he carried off to the Bishop of Alexandria. This letter was a tissue of false statements; and Bishop John, not content with sending it to Theophilus, sent it by Palladius to Rome, where it produced so unfavourable an impression against Jerome, that Pammachius and all his friends implored him to answer it. Paula herself felt that it was impossible any longer to keep silence. Besides, Theophilus had the good sense to send Isidore's letter back to Jerome; a proceeding which pleased and touched him very much, as Jerome thought he was to be condemned without a hearing. Jerome, therefore, at once set to work, and answered both Pammachius's letter and that of the Bishop of Alexandria, treating the whole question most fully, and going to the very bottom of the matter; setting forth clearly all the doctrinal points in dispute; exposing the falsehood of the statements in Isidore's letter by an exact relation of facts; and with his

intimate knowledge of Holy Scriptures, his enormous erudition, and his terrible powers of irony, confounding his accusers with more than ordinary clearness and vigour.

Whether this masterpiece of eloquence opened the eyes of Theophilus to the real dangers of Origenism, or whether he was influenced by some other less noble motive, certain it is that the whole state of things was suddenly changed. Theophilus declared himself violently opposed to Origenism, and wrote to Jerome an answer full of courtesy and kindness, acknowledging the justice of his cause. Thus Ruffinus and Bishop John found that the very bishop whom they had hoped to win over to their side was actually taking part with Jerome against them! The moment seemed a favourable one for fresh overtures towards the reconciliation which Paula so earnestly desired. Melania, whom Ruffinus had entangled in the quarrel, and who had brought down upon herself Jerome's severe speech, '*She deserves her name*,'[1] was equally weary of the strife. These two noble Roman ladies resolved, therefore, to concert measures to bring about a reconciliation between Jerome and Ruffinus.[2] Their efforts were crowned with success. On Easter Day, in the year 397, they shook hands in the presence of the bishop, on entering the Church of the Holy Sepulchre; while Bishop John took away all the prohibitions he had imposed on the Bethlehem monasteries. Soon after this Ruffinus and Melania started for the West,[3] and peaceful days arose once more for Paula and her children. Unhappily this peace was not of long duration; and fresh troubles were to embitter the closing days of one whose soul had already been so bitterly pierced with the sword of sorrow.

[1] 'Melania' comes from a Greek word signifying 'black.'

[2] Dom Gervaise's *Life of Ruffinus*.

[3] Baronius, *Ann.* 397. The Bollandists, *De S. Hieronymo*.

CHAPTER XIX.

FRESH TRIALS OF ST. PAULA—THE DEATH OF PAULINA—PAMMACHIUS TAKES THE HABIT OF A MONK.

(396–398.)

DURING the struggles we have recorded, fresh sorrows had come upon the inmates of Bethlehem. One day a messenger from Aquila brought Jerome a priest's robe. Alas! it was Nepotian's, who on his death-bed had sent it as a mark of never-dying affection to the venerable master who had instructed him in all sacerdotal virtues. The beautiful letter which Jerome had written to him on the subject never left him: he read it to everybody. When he felt his end approaching, he called his uncle, the bishop, to his bedside, and showing him his cassock, said, 'This dress, worn at the altar, you must send as a token of my gratitude to Jerome, whom I have so revered and loved, and who loves me too so tenderly.' The loss of such a disciple in the prime of youth was deeply felt by Jerome; but a still heavier grief was at hand. The wife of Pammachius, Paulina, whose health had been gradually undermined by repeated fruitless confinements, died in childbirth like Rachel, leaving her husband's home desolate and without an heir. She was scarcely thirty years of age, and universally beloved.

It is almost impossible to estimate what a loss this daughter of Paula's was to her husband. Their union

was one of those exceptionally holy and happy ones which are rarely seen on this earth, and Pammachius felt that he had lost in her not only all the sweetness of his life, but likewise his mainstay in the path of perfection. Paulina had loved the soul of her husband even more than his body, and thought herself called upon not only to make him happy, but pious. St. Jerome, speaking of her, wrote, 'She was not content with giving a good example to her husband and marching always upwards herself, but she waited for him, so that each might rise together towards God and heaven.[1] His sorrow consequently was perfectly inconsolable. He wept for her as scarcely any man before had wept. But, as a Christian, he did not content himself with fruitless tears. His whole aim was to do everything that he could to help her soul.[2]

It was an old-established custom in Rome to distribute large alms on the occasion of a funeral of an important personage; and what the rich patricians practised from feelings of pride and ostentation, Pammachius did from a higher motive, so as to call down upon his young wife the Divine blessings by good works, and by gaining the prayers of the poor, which are all-powerful in heaven. The Church of the Prince of the Apostles was chosen for this pious '*Funeraticium*.' On that day

[1] Virum non relinquens salutis comitem, sed exspectans. (*Epist* 54, *Ad Pammachium*.) We find the same thought as to the duties of Christian couples beautifully rendered in those verses of St. Paulinus of Nola to his wife:—

'Tu modo, fida comes, mecum isti accingere pugnæ,
Quam Deus infirmo præbuit auxilium.
Custos esto tui custodis, mutua redde:
Exemplum vitæ simus uterque piæ;
Ut caro non eadem tantum, sed mens quoque nobis
Una sit, atque duos spiritus unus alat.'
Appendix Operum S. Paulini, Edit. of Abbé Migne.

[2] S. Paulinus Nolanus, *Epist.* 13.

the streets of the great city were filled with an unaccustomed sight. Crowds of poor, sick, lame, and decrepit persons—those whom the Church in its emphatic language has called the '*patrons of our souls*'[1]—issued from all the most miserable quarters of the town, and wended their way towards the Vatican. The golden door of the great Basilica was thrown open to receive them: they filled the nave and the side aisles, covered the pavement, and stretched even out to the steps of the square. Pammachius was there, and distributed to all abundant alms, which God repaid to Paulina.[2]

The death of Paula's young and holy daughter had thrown a gloom over the whole of Rome, while the sight of Pammachius's noble sorrow and devotion to the poor filled every one with admiration. And St. Paulinus, who was his greatest friend, having heard both of his sorrow and of the touching and Christian manner in which he bore it, wrote him one of the most beautiful and eloquent letters which remain to us of this great and noble mind, and of which we cannot forbear giving a few extracts.

Paulinus began by praising Pammachius's natural sorrow, and showed by the example of Christ Himself the 'holiness of tears'; and still more did he praise him for having added the dew of charity to his grief. 'You have given a spectacle worthy of God and the angels,' he writes, 'when you filled the Basilica of the Prince of the Apostles with Christian poor. . . . A joy was felt throughout the city when you thus poured out bowels of mercy on all those miserable beings, or rather on yourself and your dear and sainted wife! for all that you give to the poor will be returned by our Lord to you

[1] Patronos nostrarum animarum, pauperes.—S. Paulinus Nolanus, *Epist.* 13.

[2] Lacrymas corpori fundens, eleemosynam animæ infundens.—*Ibid.*

both. The voice of the indigent is in truth the road which leads the most directly to the ear of God; and the "*prayer of the poor*," as it is written, "*pierces the sky*." ' 'O Rome!' continued Paulinus, 'if a few more of thy senators would treat thee to the like sights, thou wouldst not have to dread the menaces of the Apocalypse.' 'Without impairing our faith,' he goes on, 'we may give free vent to our sorrow and tears; and without lessening our love, we may yet bathe our faces in the joys of faith and hope. We grieve for those we have lost because they have gone from us; but we hope and trust because we are sure of seeing them again. Our God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; and of those that die in the Lord the apostle says "*they sleep*," to make us understand that death has only a short time; *for those who sleep wake again*. That is why we may weep for those whom we lose; but why we draw from our faith a sure and certain consolation in the midst of our tears. . . . It is not on human opinion, or the fiction of poets, or the hypotheses of philosophers, that our faith in a future life rests, but on truth itself. He who knoweth all things hath spoken; and who can know the secrets of God but God Himself? Let those who have no hope and no faith hug their despair, and cry out, "Our life passeth in a future life like a shadow, and none return from the dead." We have no illusions to give poignancy to our grief. "*I am the resurrection, and the life*," says our Lord; "*He that believeth in Me shall not die eternally*." Life is promised to all: the door is opened to all. Christ closes the gates of His kingdom only to those who exclude themselves.'

'Your dear wife is indeed blessed,' he adds, in conclusion—'she, for whom all things are pleading before Christ's tribunal; your merits and hers; the

good works you accomplish for her soul's sake; and the crown of her hereditary virtues. I see three brilliant stones glistening in that crown—her husband's faith, her sister's virginity, her mother's eminent piety: for her mother is Paula; her sister, Eustochium; and her husband, yourself!'

We can imagine the sorrow which this sad news brought to the inmates of Bethlehem. Paula fell into a state of exhaustion and languor which alarmed them for her life. As long as her children were only ill, she struggled to keep down her anxieties with an energy which astonished those around her; but when death followed she could no longer master her emotions. Victorious through her faith, her extraordinary tenderness of heart overcame her resolutions, and she could only cry out in her desolation, 'Ah! who shall deliver me from this body of death?'

Even Jerome fell into a state of despondency nearly equal to her own. 'Who can think,' he exclaimed, 'without bitter anguish of this rose, which was only just opening its beautiful leaves, so soon gathered and faded? Our precious pearl is shattered and our joy is gone.'[1]

The only consolation which either Paula or Jerome could receive arose from the admirable conduct of Pammachius, the broken-hearted widower. 'This death will, after all, be fruitful,' wrote Jerome a little later. 'It has brought forth a new life in Pammachius.' He was always a good Christian, but he now became an heroic one. The startling proof he had had of the transitory nature of human happiness, and the thought of heaven, where she whom he had so fondly loved had preceded him, detached him so strongly from the world, that he determined to consecrate his widowed liberty to the

[1] *Epist.* 54, *Ad Pammachium.*

practice of the sublimest virtues, and to devote to God the heart which found nothing any longer to love here below. He did not hesitate to make the sacrifice in its entirety—to walk in the footsteps of Marcella and Paula; and quitting the toga and the purple, and trampling his senatorial and consular dignities under foot, to appear publicly in the rough and humble dress of a monk.[1] Two things henceforth absorbed all his time and attention: the love of the poor, of whom he became the servant—and that of the Church, of which he had ever been the devoted champion. Paulina had left her husband her sole inheritor; and these riches passed into the hands of the sick and suffering. The ornaments of his young wife, her jewels, her robes of silk, and gold, and silver, in which he had loved to see her dressed, now served to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked. The house of Pammachius was open to all: the beautiful gateways, through which all that was most gorgeous and illustrious in Rome formerly passed, were now opened to admit whole troops of poor, sick, and afflicted. Amongst them was to be seen Pammachius, inquiring carefully into each case and relieving all that were in want: 'no longer,' as Jerome writes, 'a candidate for earthly followers and honours, but for heavenly ones.'[2] He did more than give them gold and silver; he served them with his own hands and with his whole heart; and, dressed in a coarse tunic and barefooted, would seek them out in their miserable garrets, render them the most humble services, wash and dress their loathsome sores, and would whisper, all the while, words of tenderness and holy consolation, more deeply felt even than his alms.

[1] At that time the monk's habit differed in nothing but the colour of the stuff from the dress of the common people.

[2] *Epist.* 54, *Ad Pammachium.*

In this vast field of charitable work Pammachius constantly met Paula's friend, Fabiola, who had just arrived from Bethlehem, and was full of a scheme of opening a new hospital in Rome, where Paganism had never thought of creating such asylums for human suffering. She had already started a home for the abandoned sick of the city—the first that had been attempted in the West. And now she proposed to build one for strangers, in imitation of that which Paula had built near her Bethlehem monastery. Pammachius was delighted with the idea; and so the senator and the noble patrician lady, putting their joint resources together, set on foot and carried out this generous enterprise. The spot chosen was Ostia. Since the great works of the Emperor Adrian, Ostia had acquired considerable importance; and the port, half a mile from the town, which is now the actual city, was called the 'Roman port.' Innumerable pilgrims and strangers from all parts of the world landed here on their way to and from the Eternal City; and to offer to such as fell sick on their arrival or departure the comforts of a Christian home was not only a touching thought, but a practical want, which had long been felt, but left unsupplied. This hospital, which was to suggest to Europe in the Middle Ages such thousands of similar institutions, was then an extraordinary novelty, and excited great admiration in Rome. The news spread through the whole world,[1] even to the depths of Britain, to Egypt, and to Parthia. Christianity seemed thus to have taken possession not only of noble Roman matrons, but of senators—patricians who, until now, had been considered not only hard of heart, but swelling with the pride of birth and riches.

[1] Xenodochium in Portu Romano situm totus pariter mundus audivit.—*Epist.* 54, *Ad Pammachium.*

All this was now placed at the service of the poor and suffering. What marvel, then, that the world was stirred at the sight?

The other passion which was developed in the mind of Pammachius, at the same time as his love to the poor, was devotion to the Church. A precursor of those courageous laymen of whom, thank God, the race is not yet extinct, he had served this sacred cause with all the weight of his powerful influence in the senate, both by speech and vote, when the Prefect Symmachus, clinging to the dying remnants of Paganism, demanded of the Emperor the re-establishment of the altar of Victory. Later on we shall see him take an active part in opposing first Origenism, and then the Pelagian heresy; and his zeal extended even to Africa, where he had great possessions. A letter from St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo, attests with what zeal and success he exposed the Donatist heresy, and induced a number of his serfs in that country to return to the bosom of the Church.

At the time that he was fighting thus vigorously as a faithful soldier of the Church, he studied deeply its doctrines, and especially the Holy Scriptures, which he knew by heart, and of which his letters, written to Jerome, 'exhaled the perfume.' He was always urging Jerome, as well as Paula, to complete the great Biblical works which the Church expected from the Bethlehem hermit; and St. Jerome, after Paula's death, dedicated several of his Commentaries to Pammachius, as one way of discharging his debt of gratitude and affection to his friend. But in all his polemical strifes with the enemies of the Church, the great Doctor used to trust less to his own genius and learning than to a simple prayer of Pammachius. 'I am going to fight against Amalek,' he wrote on one occasion to his friend; 'but do you, during that

time, lift up your hands to God that I may obtain the victory.'

That such noble fruits should have arisen from Paulina's death was, in truth, an enormous consolation to Paula. When she heard that Pammachius had distributed all his wife's dowry to the poor, she exclaimed, 'Oh! those were indeed the heirs to give to my child: Pammachius did not give me the time to express my wishes—he has gone before them.' 'Ordinarily,' wrote Jerome, 'husbands strew roses and lilies and rare flowers on the bier of their wives, in token of their grief and affection. Pammachius has strewn on her sacred ashes the perfumes of charity, and has embalmed Paulina in their aromatic fragrance.' 'Is it believable,' he continued, 'that the son of consuls, the glory of the house of Furia, should have braved the ridicule of the whole senate by doffing his purple and appearing in the garb of the poor? For a nobleman in his position, shame is more dreaded than anything else. Yet we see this man of the highest rank—rich, talented, eloquent—trampling under foot human respect, and becoming one of the people. It is admirable! And certainly this is not lowering, but raising oneself above one's fellows.'

The first time, in fact, that the senators saw him come into the Chamber and take his usual seat in his rough, brown-coloured suit, they all burst out laughing. But Pammachius took no notice of their ridicule; and very soon the respect with which he was treated, not only in the senate, but throughout Rome, gave more honour to his brown robe than had ever been accorded to his purple.

The more Pammachius's life was raised above the common, however, the more important it was that he should be guided aright in his new path. Both Paula

and Jerome, who loved him as only saints can love, felt this strongly; and in consequence Jerome addressed him an admirable letter, full of all those high and delicate counsels which he knew so well how to mingle with consolation and loving felicitations.

Speaking of the new line which Pammachius had marked out for himself, he first showed him how well he had understood the age in which he lived, and the small intrinsic value of the things he had sacrificed for God. 'Before giving yourself entirely to Christ and His poor,' he writes, 'you had a high position in the senate, but this you shared with others; the world is full of proconsular and other dignities. You were in the first rank, but not the only one. Such honours, when they are too lavishly bestowed, rather lower their possessor than raise him. What is it for a man of really noble mind to see himself compelled to share his honours with such as are vile and unworthy? It is some time since Cesar (whom Cicero justly reproached for it), by raising certain men to posts of importance, dishonoured these places without really honouring those persons. The privileges formerly reserved to those of the noblest birth, which Marius himself, the conqueror of Numidia and of the Teutons, coveted in vain, and which Scipio only obtained owing to his advanced age, common soldiers now enjoy; and palms wave over the heads of the coarsest barbarians.' 'We have received more,' he continues, 'than we can ever give. We leave things of small value to find untold riches. Jesus Christ returns a hundredfold all that is done for His sake.' And even in this world it comes true. 'For Pammachius, as a senator, was only known to the senate. To-day that he has made himself the servant of Christ's poor he is known and blessed by the Church throughout the world.' Jerome

consequently exhorted Pammachius to persevere in his voluntary poverty, and in the generous service of the poor; not to serve them from a distance, but personally, after the example of Abraham. 'Abraham,' he writes, 'might very well have left to his servants the care of receiving his guests; but he took care not to lose this privilege himself; he reserved the honour for him and Sarah. He washed their feet, and brought himself, on his shoulders, the fatted calf from his flock. Sarah, in the same way, made savoury meats; while he, standing, waited on his guests. And thus, having fulfilled the duties of hospitality towards men, he deserved to be permitted to entertain angels.'

Two other virtues Jerome insisted on in one who had embraced, like Pammachius, the great and holy cause of the Church and of suffering humanity.

First, *humility*. 'No! it is not enough,' he wrote, 'to disdain the riches which are here to-day and gone to-morrow: Crates of Thebes did that. So did Antisthenes and many others, who were none the less bad and vicious men. But a Christian should do more than a philosopher, an animal feeding on glory—the slave of popular favour! If you be the first patrician who has embraced the life of a monk, beware lest you pride yourself upon it. Humble yourself rather; for in vain do you strive to lower yourself—you will never go down so low as Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, who has made Himself Son of Man, for us and for our salvation. It is true that you go barefooted, clad in a coarse brown tunic; you make yourself the equal of the poor; you enter with respect the hovel of the wretched; you are the eye of the blind, the feet to the lame; you carry water for them; you chop wood; you make their fires. Well, all this, and more than this, is done by Paula and

Eustochium—and they are noble Romans too—and women!'

To this virtue of humility Jerome added another, and that was *chastity*. 'What would it profit you,' he continues, 'to despise riches and worldly pomp, if you did not also follow Jesus Christ? But to follow Him, what does it mean? It is to abjure every kind of sin and practise every virtue. . . . I conjure you then, my dearest friend, on account of the brotherly love I bear you in our Lord, do not give merely your money. Give yourself to Jesus Christ. Offer Him a living sacrifice—the sacrifice of your body and soul. The old enemy of our salvation knows well that the struggles of continence are harder than those of riches. It is easier to reject exterior things: an internal warfare costs us far more. . . . If we offer our Lord our hearts with our riches, the offer will be accepted; but if, giving only to God the things which are without, we give to the devil that which is within, the division would be too iniquitous.'

Never had Paganism raised itself to so high a level as this Christian teaching, which went far beyond philosophy in its sublimest flights. It had discovered the vanity of things here below, and pushed certain noble souls to despise them; but it had never gone further. Christianity alone has set before us that higher standard of self-abnegation—that giving up of ourselves in purity and chastity—as the ultimate aim of perfect virtue; for Christianity possesses what philosophy had not—Jesus Christ, as our model and the inspirer of all sanctity. 'Our Sanctifier,' concludes Jerome, 'is Christ Himself, without whom no one will see the face of God. Our Redeemer and our Ransom is Christ. Christ is our all in all; and he who shall leave all things for Jesus Christ

will find *Him* as his everlasting and great reward. *Our portion for eternity is God!*'

Such was the tenor of Jerome's letter to Pammachius, and he was worthy of it. 'Great among the great, the first among the first,'[1] he was destined one day to a place on our altars.

[1] Magnus in magnis, primus in primis.—*Epist.* 54, *Ad Pammachium.*

CHAPTER XX.

BIRTH OF THE YOUNG PAULA—JOY OF PAULA AT BETHLEHEM —CONVERSION OF ALBINUS—LETTER FROM JEROME TO LÆTA ON THE EDUCATION OF HER DAUGHTER.

(398–400.)

At the time when Pammachius was receiving from Jerome these kind and tender counsels a piece of joyful intelligence arrived at Bethlehem, like a flash of bright joy in the midst of so much previous sadness and sorrow. Paula's only son, Toxotius, whose marriage to Læta, the daughter of the Pagan priest Albinus, we have already related, had become a father. Læta had been safely confined of a little girl, to whom they had given the revered name of her grandmother beyond the seas—Paula.

The birth of this child was an immense joy to the inmates of Bethlehem. First, because she was the fruit of a vow which had been suggested to her parents by Jerome. Knowing that Læta was fretting for a child, he and Paula had advised her to imitate many of the saints in the Old Testament, and promise that the first child which God should give her should be consecrated to Him. Læta had made this vow on a martyr's tomb, and the little Paula was the result.

Another reason which made this event so happy a one was that they trusted it might bring about another,

long and earnestly prayed for by them all—the conversion of the pontiff Albinus. Læta had made it one of the great objects of her life. But the task was a difficult one, and powerful links still bound Albinus to Paganism. On certain sides Albinus seemed accessible; he was a good, benevolent old man, passionately devoted to his daughter, with a gravity of manner and a purity in his domestic relations unusual among the Pagan nobility. Moreover, albeit a priest, he believed no more in the gods than he did in Christ. But he was, like his two friends Symmachus and Prætextatus, and others, hemmed in by a triple barrier of prejudices and preventions which separated him from Christianity.

First, he had all the obstinacy of an old Roman. He was one of those who, believing in the solidarity of the destinies of Rome with the worship of the gods, thought he should be wanting in fidelity to his country and to the memory of his ancestors, whose revered images ornamented his domestic hearth, were he to embrace the new religion. Symmachus had well expressed the feelings of this class of men in Rome when, on presenting the famous petition to the Emperor for the restoration of the altar of Victory, he had said in the senate, 'Excellent princes, fathers of our country, respect the venerable old age to which pious rites have brought our city of Rome. . . . It is this religion which has caused the whole world to submit to our laws. It has repulsed Hannibal from our walls, and the Gauls from the Capitol.' Every one knows the magnificent answer of St. Ambrose to this rhetoric.

But there was another motive. At a time when the patricians had little else but vain show to console them for the loss of their privileges and past power, the pomp of the priesthood flattered the pride of the descendants

of the old races, and they loved to adorn themselves with the dignities which their ancestors had considered so honourable. Prætextatus himself was proud to add to his title that of '*Father of Sacrifice*;' and Albinus clung to the glories of his pontificate in a like manner.

But the third and greatest obstacle to Albinus's conversion was the austerity of Christianity. It was not that he was a man of pleasure—one of those degenerate Romans who plunged into every sensual excess—but he was one of those who delighted in mingling a certain grand ancient simplicity with the extreme elegance and luxurious civilisation of the age. He loved an easy, self-indulgent life, far from Rome and public business. He would pay long visits to Prætextatus at Baïa, and go on from one rich villa to the other; and the refined luxury and comforts of such an existence were decidedly opposed to the self-denying hardness practised by the followers of the Crucified One.

To this easy and enjoyable life Albinus added an exquisite literary taste; and even that, in the prejudiced opinion of those days, was a fresh obstacle to the reception of the faith. For Paganism appeared to the men of that time as the necessary form of poetry and art; and philosophy—that 'science of sciences, the most precious gift of the gods,' as they called it—afforded them certain vague principles, which, while flattering their pride, wrapt their minds in a kind of tranquil indifferentism of which Symmachus gave the following summary: 'All that men revere is alike. We gaze on the same stars—we have one common heaven—the same universe shrouds us in its immensity; what does it signify, then, by what path we arrive at God? Let us leave such discussions to the idle.' St. Ambrose gave

a magnificent answer to these very arguments, by going to the bottom of the question, exposing the culpable indifference and egotism concealed under these high-sounding phrases, and proving that Truth had her rights; and that there was an absolute duty for men to accept a religion which had been positively instituted by God Himself. If one adds to these causes the tyranny of habit, the disagreeable necessity of breaking with the past and with one's friends, the fear of ridicule—all, in fact, that stirs up the inner nature of a man, and especially of one who shrank from every kind of sacrifice, we shall form an idea of what made the conversion of Albinus so difficult, if not impossible.

His wife had tried, but had completely failed; his daughter, as yet, had been equally unsuccessful. Everything seemed to glide over the sceptical soul of the old man without touching him in the least. He would have defied the whole world to shake him; and if any one had told him that one day he would be a Christian, he would have declared such a prophet mad. Also, it was no use to expect such a miracle from argument or reasoning, but from patience and prayer. And prayers were asked for as earnestly at Bethlehem as at Rome. Jerome could not believe but that Albinus—a man of honour and sense—must end by being convinced of the triumph of Christianity and the irrevocable defeat of the gods. 'Rome itself,' he exclaimed, 'is becoming a desert for the Gentiles. To-day the cross is become the standard of our armies, and the same sign of our salvation adorns the purple of our emperors and the diadem of the empress.'[1] 'The Capitol is deserted, dust

[1] Allusion is here made to the 'Labarum' of the emperors, and to a famous ornament lately given by Arcadius to the Empress Eudoxia as a wedding present. The cross surmounted it and glittered above the

and cobwebs cover the pagan altars; while on the Christian feast-days Rome rises as one man, and crowds of people, leaving the Pagan temple in ruins, flock to the basilicas and kneel on the tombs of the martyrs. If wisdom does not influence Albinus, surely shame will soon compel him to own himself a Christian!'

In truth, the whole known world was being converted. 'Serapis, in Egypt, adored Jesus Christ; the god of Gaza wept over his abandoned altars, and expected every moment the destruction of his temple. Christianity had even spread beyond the limits of the empire.' 'Persians and Indians adored Jesus Christ, the Armenian left his quiver, the Hun his buckler, to chant the Psalms of David. The Sun of Righteousness warmed even the icy mountains of Scythia; the German with his red hair and wild look brought our Lord into his tent. . . . The earth shall be covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.'

So wrote Jerome; but as yet no effect seemed to have been made on Albinus. There are states of mind in which men neither see nor feel. Not only, in his voluntary blindness, did the splendours and triumphs of Christianity fail to attract his attention, but in his own house, before his very eyes, the virtues of that cherished daughter, whom Christianity alone had made so pure and so devoted, brought no revelation of the truth to his mind. In fact, in all ages, none are so little disposed to see the light as men who are estranged from religion by habit more than by conviction; by self-indulgence; by the love of ease and comfort; by an instinctive dread of Christian austerity, and by a horror of any kind of yoke.

crown. St. Augustine and St. Chrysostom equally refer to this head-dress; and Baronius (t. v. p. 3) gives us a fac-simile of it, after an old medal.

Hedged in by a certain number of strong prejudices, which they falsely imagine are fixed ideas, they persist in blindly following their own way, not perceiving that these very ideas are less reasonable convictions than obstinate ignorance and persistent weakness, together with a dread of the effort which would be required to own themselves in the wrong.

But years passed on; Albinus was drawing every day nearer to the grave. Nothing is more painful than to see a mocking or indifferent smile on the lips of an old man who has no faith and who is about to die. Læta, who adored her father, felt it bitterly, and poured out her sorrow into the sympathising ears of Paula and Eustochium. Jerome encouraged her by reminding her of the gentle influence of a Christian woman, who can do everything in the end, on the obstinate soul of husband or father, not by discussion or argument, but by example, by tenderness, and by prayer. He added his conviction that the day would come when Albinus would be converted. 'Læta,' he wrote, 'my very dear child in Jesus Christ, never despair of the safety of your father. His conversion must be your work, and you will obtain it. It will crown your whole family with joy, and this happiness will be due to you.'

Jerome was right. Providence has resources, before which the hardest heart will yield. And of those means so frequently made use of by grace, there is scarcely one more powerful, despite its apparent weakness, than that of a little child on its grandfather's knees. Hence Læta's joy at the birth of the little Paula.

Albinus was indeed delighted with his grandchild. He had her incessantly in his arms. As she grew older she mingled with her childish kisses the sacred names which Læta and Toxotius had taught her, and in her

baby language would lisp out to him the 'Alleluia.' 'Could one have believed,' exclaimed Jerome, 'that a grandchild would be given to Albinus who was the fruit of a vow on a martyr's tomb? that this baby should first bring to his ears the Christian "Alleluia"? and that the old man should nurse in his bosom a virgin already consecrated to God?' 'We have caught him,' he wrote joyfully to Læta. 'I believe Jupiter himself would be converted if he were thus surrounded! Yes, the same faith which has won for you your child, will equally win your father. Is it not written, "*that which is impossible to men is possible with God*"? However late his conversion may be, yet, when once effected, his salvation is sure.'

The grace came at last to Albinus. Won by the mysterious charm of the beautiful child, and surrounded by the pure Christian joys and love of his home, the old Pagan felt himself softening without knowing why. The name of Christ, lisped by that baby voice, penetrated his very heart. This heart once touched, his pride yielded, and the scales fell from his eyes.

The light of truth burst upon him, and Læta had the happiness (which she had so long wept and prayed for) to see her father believe as implicitly as her little child, and find in his new faith and in the bosom of his family a sweetness and peace which he had never before experienced. This conversion caused equal joy at Bethlehem. 'How wise we were,' repeated Jerome, 'to wait and wait, in firm hope, without ever letting ourselves despair! It is certainly true that a holy home always ends by sanctifying an infidel man.'[1] One of the greatest mercies God can bestow on a man is, in truth, to bring him in

[1] Et bene feliciterque exspectavimus. Sancta et fidelis domus virum sanctificat infidelem.—*Epist. ad Lætam.*

contact with holy souls, and especially with a Christian wife or children. There are few women who have a husband, a father, a son, or a brother to bring back to God who realise strongly enough how great is their power in this matter; nor how obstinately they should persevere in prayer and hope, never allowing themselves to be discouraged. Who has not been a witness, among ourselves, to a miracle like that of Albinus? 'Where is the man,' exclaims the great and eloquent Père Lacordaire, 'who has not, even at sixty, something to learn from his child? Who is there that, not having known God in his youth, seeing his little child kneel night after night by its mother's knee, does not, in the very simplicity of its prayer, feel something of the mystery which is thus so vividly represented to him? O tenderness of God's ways! Our mother taught us His holy name when we were children; the wife whispered it in the nuptial intimacy of married life to the enraptured youth; the daughter tells it to the old man, and brings him back in his failing days to the revelation of his childhood! Heaven alone will tell how many souls have been saved by this last effort of love and truth. How many who have lived all their lives, seeing nothing, understanding nothing, have been awakened on their death-beds, and have adored with their dying breath the eternal love which has come before them under the angel shape of a much-loved daughter!'

This child of many prayers grew and throve, and Læta already began to be anxious about its education. How was she to train this little soul? Læta mistrusted her youth and inexperience, and turned to Paula and Bethlehem for guidance in the matter. Jerome was consulted, and the result was a beautiful letter, which, with his Epistle to Gaudentius on the Education of Pacatula,

forms the most admirable treatise on the subject for all young Christians. St. Francis of Sales earnestly recommended the reading of these two letters to all mothers; and Fénélon, in his admirable treatise on the subject, borrows many of the same ideas.

'It is a question of training a soul,' begins Jerome, 'a soul destined to be the temple of the living God. The great duty of a mother is to form her children's minds. It is written of a woman that she shall "save her soul" by bringing children into the world; but that is if, by careful training, she brings them up in the paths of virtue.'

Passing from this point to education itself, Jerome insists on great care and precaution as regards all that could injure the innocence of a child. At the same time he urges a large and generous system, one which will dilate and not compress anything which tends to the development of conscience, heart, or mind. Jerome advises that the child should be excited to study not by constraint and scoldings, but by rewards and emulation. 'Make her make little letters in ivory or wood, like playthings, so that she may learn to read and amuse herself at the same time. Encourage her by little presents such as children love. Give her companions of her own age, whose energy shall egg her on. If she is slow at learning, do not tease her; encourage herrather by praise. Above all, beware she does not take a disgust to her lessons, which perhaps may last her all through life.' In the same way he insists on the developing of the affections by making her taste early the sweets of home, and by loving demonstrativeness towards her, making her loving and good herself. 'When she sees her grandfather, let her jump into his lap, throw her arms round his neck, kiss him, and sing to him her little "Alleluia." When her father comes in, let her have an equally ready smile

and kiss for him, to show him that she is pleased to see him, and that she loves everybody as everybody loves her; let her feel that the whole family is glad to see this fresh little rose on the stem. Talk to her also of her other grandmother and her aunt here, who loved her so much without having seen her, and whom she must learn to love in return.' 'But above all,' he continues, 'be most careful to form her conscience, that is, to inspire her with a horror of evil and a love of good. Let her hear nothing, say nothing, which shall be contrary to the fear and love of God. Shelter her from every semblance of evil or impurity. Flowers fade quickly; a breath is enough to tarnish the spotlessness of the lily. . . . Above all, O parents, do not forget that the real model of your children will be yourselves. Let her see nothing either in father or mother which she feels is wrong, and which she must not imitate. For you will form your child far less by your words than by your example.'

To these counsels Jerome adds a few words on manual work, which he never forgets to recommend in his letters. 'Be sure you teach her to work,' he writes, 'to sew and knit, to hold the distaff and spindle, to weave flax with her fingers.' But the basis of the whole education was to be piety, tender and loving, but solid and practical; fed by holy exercises, and nourished by assiduous study of the Bible.

This is an outline of Jerome's idea of Christian education, but he enters into a multitude of minute details, for 'nothing is small as regards the training of a human soul;' and the letter is worth studying in its smallest particulars, as referring not only to the special child in question, but to all young girls who are to be brought up in a Christian manner in the world.

For the success of such an education, however, Rome

was little suited, and so both Paula and Eustochium urged that, by-and-by, the care of the little girl should be entrusted to them; Jerome promising to be at the same time her father and master. 'Yes,' he wrote a little later to Læta, 'send her, when she is a little older, to Bethlehem, where her grandmother and aunt will form her character with ease. This precious pearl will be well placed in the home of Mary and by the manger of the Holy Child Jesus. Brought up in the convent with these holy virgins, she will only see the world through the life of angels. Eustochium implores you to send her her niece. Entrust this child to her. She is to be the heiress of her sanctity: let her be her companion. Let her see, admire, and love from her childhood one whose very appearance inspires goodness. Let this new little Paula be cradled in the arms of her grandmother, who will begin for her grandchild the training she so happily accomplished in her child. And as for me,' he adds, with emotion, 'I shall be her *magister*, her *nutritius*. I will bear her in my arms; and, old as I am, I will teach her her first lessons, prouder in that than the philosopher who educated Alexander; for, after all, Aristotle only brought up a king destined to perish by a Babylonian poisoner; whereas I shall be bringing up a virgin, a spouse of Jesus Christ, destined to reign with Him eternally in heaven.'

The little Paula came, accordingly, to Bethlehem, but after her grandmother was no more; she was brought up by Eustochium; and it was she who, the sole survivor of the holy band of friends, closed the eye of her venerable master and father, St. Jerome.

CHAPTER XXI.

ST. JEROME, AT PAULA'S SUGGESTION, CONCLUDES HIS COMMENTARIES ON THE PROPHETS—REVIVAL OF THE STRIFE WITH RUFFINUS—PAULA'S SADNESS.

(398—400.)

DURING this time a danger, often foreseen by Paula without frightening her, threatened the very existence of her monastery. The hospitality which she exercised indiscriminately to all strangers who came to worship at the Manger, added to her other charities, had exhausted all her resources. The property she had had in Greece had been sold, and Paula found herself actually destitute. 'Ah!' she exclaimed at the news, 'what does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? God had given me great riches, He has now taken away all. May His holy name be blessed.' Nevertheless, it was necessary to avoid, if possible, the closing of the hospital; so that Jerome came to her aid by sending his younger brother Paulinian into Dalmatia, so as to realise what remained of his parental inheritance. But the barbarians had laid waste the country to such an extent that the sale brought but feeble resources to the Bethlehem houses. In this strait Paula was compelled to borrow, and raised enough in this manner to maintain the hospital until her death. 'Eustochium will be rich enough,' she would say, 'if she be only rich in virtue;' and Eustochium cheerfully

acquiesced in her mother's views. As for Paula herself, she had always wished to be poor, to die poor, and not to possess even the shroud in which she should be buried. A faithful follower of the poverty of Jesus Christ, it was Himself whom she daily sought, and clothed, and fed, and visited in the persons of His poor; and her good works were seasoned by continual meditation on His life as revealed in the words of Holy Writ.

This meditation on Holy Scripture had always been Paula's delight, and she stimulated Jerome more than ever to complete the great works he had undertaken. Scarcely had the commentaries on the twelve minor prophets been accomplished than she urged him to complete those on the four greater ones. 'This ocean of prophecy is so vast!' Jerome would exclaim. 'It would be better to hold one's tongue than not to say enough.' 'No,' replied Paula, 'a few words even are better than nothing. You know human nature, which enjoys less what you grant than it repines at what you refuse. Besides, you have put your hand to the plough, would you turn back? You have begun and well-nigh completed a gigantic work, would you leave it imperfect—unfinished?' Jerome ended by yielding. 'You will it,' he replied, 'and I must obey. Well, then, let us spread our sails to the wind of the Holy Spirit, which blows, as saith the prophet, from the four quarters of the earth.' And thus urged on and inspired by Paula and Eustochium, the old hermit would again set to work, and with the same courage and perseverance as before.

It was always to Bethlehem that the Christian world turned for counsels in trouble. And so, towards the year 398, Salvina wrote from Constantinople to pour out her sorrow at the death of her young husband Nebridius, and to implore Jerome's guidance for her future life. Nebri-

dius was one of those pure and admirable specimens of a young and earnest Christian nobleman whom no one would have thought to find in the voluptuous court of Constantinople. He was the son of the sister of the Empress Flaccilla; Theodosius loved him as his own son, and brought him up as one of his own children; but neither the suit of mail, nor the life in the palace, nor the life of the camp had spoilt his heart, because, as Jerome wrote, 'whether at court or in camp, he served a higher Master.' He had placed his chastity under the sure shelter of charity, and all that came to him from his dignities or the imperial munificence passed into the bosom of the poor. Theodosius, anxious to find for this pure and noble youth a spouse worthy of him, pitched upon Salvina, an African by birth, and the daughter of one of those old kings of Mauritania who for a long time disputed their independence with Rome. Theodosius had also a political object in view. Salvina's father and uncle had been killed in battle, and this marriage with his own nephew would pacify her people and restore peace to Africa. The marriage accordingly was celebrated, but the union of the two was destined to be as short as it was happy and holy. Nebridius died in the flower of his youth, and Salvina found herself a widow and an orphan, with two little children, in the most dangerous of earthly courts. Jerome had been an intimate friend of the father of Nebridius, and though he did not know Salvina personally, he hastened to write to her as follows:—

'All flesh is grass, and its glory passes as the flower of the field. Nebridius, alas! is no more. But though he lived but a short space, he fulfilled a long time, for his soul pleased God. In his place we have his two charming children. But he has left us another treasure, and that is his spouse, the inheritor of his piety and a

partner in all his good works. The little Nebridius, I hear, reminds one of his father in every way—he is like him in face, in expression, in character. A spark of the same noble energy already shines in the son. Then there is his little sister, who is like a basket of lilies and roses. She has her father's features with a greater amount of beauty, and is so like her mother that in this sole child you find at once both parents. She is so charming and so gentle that every one is proud of her. The Emperor himself does not disdain to hold her in his arms, nor the Empress to press her to her heart. She chatters and plays and clings to your neck, and is beloved by every one. You have, then, two great consolations, O Salvina, in these beautiful children, whom you have to bring up, and in whom you will find their father once more. For instead of the spouse whom God has taken from you, you will have two children to love. Enlarge your heart; give to your son the devotion and care you gave to his father. It is not a small merit before God to bring up children piously and well.' He then goes on with more personal counsels to Salvina, 'given less to herself than to those of her age in her position,' delicately suggests Jerome. He repeats to her, in other words, what he had said to Furia on the dignity of widowhood and the necessity of preserving it honourably through the austere means which we already know. Salvina profited wonderfully by this advice, and became, like Olympia and others, one of those noble and holy widows who were at that time the glory of the Church of Byzantium, and the joy and crown of the great St. Chrysostom.

But whilst Jerome was engrossed in these great and charitable works, he was suddenly attacked in a new and unexpected manner, and had to sustain a fresh polemical warfare which saddened him more than any other.

The vessel which conveyed Ruffinus and Melania to the West brought war and not peace. Yet, at first, it had raised Jerome's fondest hopes. Melania had embarked at Cæsarea with Ruffinus, and after a passage of twenty days had arrived safely in Italy. All that remained of her family—her son Publicola; his daughter, named Melania after her grandmother; Pinianus, the young Melania's husband—together with a multitude of patrician friends and relations, had hastened to Naples, with all the splendour belonging to their rank, to receive the illustrious recluse from the Mount of Olives, whose name, like that of Paula, was so illustrious in Rome. Melania arrived with a simplicity befitting her ascetic renown, which contrasted strangely with the pomp of those who had come to meet her. Sixty years of age, dressed in a simple robe of dark stuff, covered with a coarse cloak like a reed mat, her face pale with vigils and fasts, and tanned by long exposure to an Eastern sun, she realised fully the idea that had been formed of this austere lady who had so long lived out of the world. The procession was formed: the Appian Way groaned under the weight of gold chariots drawn by richly caparisoned horses. In the midst of all this splendid escort, Melania rode on a wretched horse, inferior to an ordinary ass, thus humbling the pride and pomp of her family by her own poverty. She stopped for a short time at Nola to see Paulinus, who was her near relation, and who was enabled to accommodate all her vast company in the space round his humble dwelling, close to the church of the martyr St. Felix, and who afterwards wrote an enthusiastic account of her visit to his friend Sulpicius Severus.[1]

Melania found Rome very different, in some respects,

[1] S. Paulinus Nolanus, *Epist.* 29. Cf. Palladius, *Vita Ruffini.*

from what she had left it. Her example and that of Paula had turned many minds in the same direction, and in almost every patrician family the great evangelical virtues had made illustrious conquests. Palladius, who had been sent to Rome two years before, was amazed at the large number of noble men and women whom he found marching courageously in the path towards perfection, as well as at the multitude of virgins consecrated to God who were beginning to people the Italian convents.[1] Modern researches have discovered of late years many of their tombs in the *Agro Verano* and elsewhere, with the pious and touching inscriptions which sorrow and love had engraved upon them. The grandiloquent title of '*Clarissimis*,' &c., had disappeared before the simple qualification of '*Virgin consecrated to God.*' Thus on the tomb of Adeodata, dead in the latter half of the fourth century, one reads these simple and beautiful words: 'Adeodata, worthy and holy virgin, here rests in peace, called by Christ her Spouse to Himself.'[2] Again, the tomb of Eusebia bore the following inscription: 'Eusebia, a virgin consecrated to our Lord, in imitation of the wise virgins, deserved to have Jesus Christ as her Spouse.'

Among these tombs we find one to 'Prætextata,' of the family we have before mentioned, showing how even these once fierce enemies of the faith of Christ ended by bowing their necks under His yoke, and giving Him their nobly born daughters as virgins.

Melania had come to Rome to confirm her grandchild in her project of a purer union with her husband, and to endeavour to detach the other members of her

[1] Palladius, *De Opiano.*

[2] Adeodatæ dignæ et meritæ virgini: quiescit hic in pace jubente Christo ejus.—De Rossi, *Bulletin Archéologique*, Oct. 1863.

family from the pomp and luxury with which they were surrounded. She succeeded, in spite of the hailstorm of opposition which again fell upon her. The calamities which had fallen upon the Empire, the successive invasions of the barbarians into Italy, their imminent march on Rome itself—all these warnings and dangers gave additional weight to her words. 'My children,' she would say to them, 'it is nearly 400 years ago since it was written of the times in which we are living, "*The last hour is at hand.*" Is it not then the moment to strip yourselves of the vanities of this life? Endless miseries are on the very point of falling upon us. And you fancy you will still be allowed to enjoy in peace the riches of your ancestors!' These exhortations ended by bearing fruit. The young Melania and her husband, following the example of Paulinus of Nola and his wife Theresa, freed their 8,000 slaves, sold a large part of their vast possessions, and distributed the price among the hospitals, the poor, and the Church.

'This [exclaimed Melania the elder] was so much rescued from the talons of the barbarians.'[1] Finally, in 409, just one year before the taking of Rome by Alaric, Melania left Italy again, and this time carrying with her her whole family. They passed first into Sicily and then into Africa, where St. Augustine received them joyfully; then, after having edified for several years the Church in Africa by the sight of their great virtues, the little colony came on to the Holy Land. Jerome, in the very last letter which he wrote to St. Augustine, just before the death of Eustochium, mentions Melania's children with parental tenderness, and sends him their love and respects. The venerable Melania had preceded

[1] Palladius, *Vita Ruffini*; M. de Montalembert, *Les Moines de l'Occident*, t. i.

them to Jerusalem, where she died forty days after her arrival.

But this journey to Rome, which had such satisfactory results for Melania, brought about a new and terrible rupture between Jerome and Ruffinus. The latter had never renounced his Origenism, in his heart, and, taking advantage of his prestige at Rome and his relations with Melania, he began secretly to propagate the doctrines of the great Alexandrian Doctor, and afterwards a translation of Origen's famous work called the 'Peri Archôn' (or 'Principles'), containing all the errors for which he had been most reproached. Ruffinus left out some passages on the Trinity and the Incarnation which would have shocked Roman ears, but retained many subtle errors on the origin of souls and a future life. But he skilfully contrived to place all these doctrines under the apparent protection of Jerome's great name, which he did by a preface, in which, loading him with cunning flattery, he reminded his readers of the praises formerly bestowed by Jerome on Origen's genius, and thus, as it were, presented him to his Roman critics as the partisan of the very heresies which Jerome had so vigorously opposed in the East.

The appearance of this translation, secretly but actively circulated in Rome, troubled many minds. Jerome's vigilant friends felt both the peril and the snare, and hastened to send a copy of the 'Peri Archôn' to Jerome, imploring him to clear away the mists of error which Ruffinus had raised, and which seemed to make Jerome's own conduct ambiguous and contradictory. Jerome was deeply pained at this act of treachery on the part of his friend, whose reconciliation with him at the Holy Sepulchre was evidently a feint. 'This is how my friends love me,' he exclaimed: 'they

won't be even heretics without me!' He wrote instantly a letter to Ruffinus to complain of this strange proceeding, and began a translation of Origen's work without any omissions; which he sent, as soon as completed, to Pammachius.

Ruffinus's plot was thus exposed. But he had already left Rome, having obtained letters of communion from the Pope, and refused any answer to Jerome's letter. In the meantime Origenism had been condemned in a numerous Council at Alexandria. The Pope Anastasius was determined to oppose with equal vigour the infiltration of these dangerous doctrines in the Eternal City, and consequently summoned Ruffinus to Rome to give an account of his doctrine. But Ruffinus took care not to answer the summons; while his wrath broke out against Jerome, and he drew up what he called an 'Apology,' but which, in reality, was only a furious invective against Jerome himself, in which he heaped a whole mountain of accusations against his old friend, attacking at the same time his works, his doctrines, his acts, and his intentions. This writing pretended to be meant only for the friends of the author, and not for the public. But it was industriously circulated by these very friends in Italy, Gaul, Spain, Africa, and Dalmatia. Jerome thus learnt that he was censured in every sense by Ruffinus, without being able to answer him, not having seen the accusation. Extracts arrived from time to time like arrows launched by an invisible enemy at the old Bethlehem lion; but at last Paulinian placed some considerable fragments before him, and implored him to write a defence. No work could have been more distasteful to Jerome. 'I take Jesus, the Divine Mediator, to witness,' he exclaimed, 'that it is with the most extreme repugnance that I descend into this arena. See

only the spectacle which we give to the Church! Two old men, two priests, two monks, both protesting their attachment to the Catholic faith, are about to draw their swords one against the other! And why? On account of a heretic; can we not leave the heretics alone, and so cease this unseemly strife?'

In truth, this warfare between two such men was a profound grief to the Church. St. Augustine wrote to Jerome with tears, 'A vile libel has been circulated against you in Africa, to which you have been kind enough to send me your reply. And after having read both, though I feel you were forced to defend yourself, yet I cannot help groaning over such divisions between two persons whose affection was formerly known to the whole Church. On whose heart can one henceforth rely? Whose affection can be considered sure? And what friend may one not fear to find one day an enemy, if such dissensions can arise between a Ruffinus and a Jerome? Ah! if I could but meet you somewhere, I would throw myself at your feet, and in the name of Christ, in the name of so many brethren weak in the faith, I would implore you to forgive—to cease this wordy strife and be reconciled!' St. Augustine, however, acknowledged the great moderation which Jerome had shown in his reply, and admired the way in which he had remained on the defensive without giving vent to the indignation which Ruffinus's bitter and spiteful attacks had naturally called forth in his soul. But throughout this strife Jerome had no personal feelings; he was fighting solely for truth and justice. 'Let him lay down his spear,' he exclaimed, 'and I will quickly throw aside the buckler. There is only one thing to which I cannot consent, and that is to allow my faith to remain under a cloud, or to desert its defence. When faith is at

stake I may die on the rack, but I cannot be silent. Let there be between us but one faith, and at once peace will be restored.'

It is perhaps with some sorrow that we see Jerome's bitterness against Ruffinus survive even his death. 'That scorpion!' as he called him. But if the word was harsh, it was true. After all, Jerome was on his defence; the aggressor was not himself, but Ruffinus; and how cruel were Ruffinus's attacks, and against what a friend!

And in the midst of all this polemical strife what became of Paula? We know how much she had suffered in the first phase of the struggles. But on this occasion the quarrel was even more painful; persons were attacked even more than doctrines; Jerome's venerable character was assailed on all sides by a man whom she had hoped had been entirely reconciled to him. And the illustrious Doctor was compelled to interrupt the completion of his great works in order to write the necessary defence both of himself and his faith. At the same time the fatal poison of Origenism had spread among the Egyptian hermits, and Paula had the sorrow of seeing those whom she had most revered, men whose feet she had kissed—Isidore, Ammonius, and many others—exiled to Palestine by Theophilus, while she herself dared not offer them an asylum. At this sight her soul suffered an anguish of which God only knew the depths; and the tears which so often flowed from her eyes were caused less by her personal sorrows than by the trials in the Church from the evil passions of men.

Her life was closed in the midst of all these causes of sadness, and up to the last hour of this saint's life we shall have nothing but fresh trials and suffering to record. It seemed as if God had chosen to purify this chosen soul by making her pass through the fiery crucible of con-

tinual suffering, just as a last ray of autumn sun is needed to ripen the choicest fruits. We shall see her sinking like the day at its close in the calm and beautiful light of an evening sky, while the lustre of her virtues acquired only a brighter halo from her afflictions.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE LAST YEARS OF PAULA'S LIFE—HER DEATH.

(400–404.)

If it be true, as the author of the 'Imitation' asserts, that there is no love without suffering, and that nothing assimilates us so much to Jesus Christ and completes our perfection like sorrow, one understands how it is that God makes chosen souls pass by this royal road; and that it should be, in fact, a natural law of great sanctity. But there is not only a martyrdom of the body; there is the bleeding of the soul and the tortures of interior martyrdom. This last suffering especially was Paula's portion, and in presenting this phenomenon in the history of a saint she has pointed out the road to a multitude of others who were to pass through it in their turn, and to whom she appears in their trials as a bright and shining light.

'For forty-one years temptations have crushed me to the earth,' exclaims St. Chantal; and what temptations! —darkness, dryness, desolation of all sorts, impossible to describe. 'I recommend to your prayers,' writes St. Francis of Sales, 'the Queen-Bee of our new hive, who is sorely tried in soul and spirit. I think God means to make this our holy mother like another St. Paula, who, like a sweet and fragrant violet, has given us such a perfume in the garden of the Church.'[1] It is this rare

[1] Letter of April 3, 1611.

perfume which we must once more breathe during the last four years of Paula's life, when God seemed, by this His last touch, to have given, as it were, the finishing stroke to her noble and beautiful soul. But even looking back rapidly over her whole life, we shall see that, since her widowhood, even holy joy was accidental to Paula—the real groundwork of her life was sorrow. At Rome, ever since her husband's death, though at times outwardly bright, mourning overshadowed her soul. In vain did she give herself to God with all the generosity of her noble nature; in vain did she strive to pour out her whole loving heart in the relief of the poor and suffering; in vain did she force her mind to the study of Holy Scriptures. Nothing can bring a smile of real joy to this bruised and broken heart! A 'widow indeed,' she is ever weeping inwardly her irreparable loss. The sudden death of Blesilla reopened the bleeding wound. Paula then left Rome for the East, after the most cruel struggles with herself and with her family. Here for a short time her enthusiasm seemed to have overcome her sorrow, but the thorn in her soul made its cruel point again felt. If her heart is consoled at Bethlehem in the peace and solitude of the Manger; if she sees 'more of the heavens above her head' (as she wrote), she does not cease to feel that her feet are still on this sad earth, well called in Holy Writ the 'Valley of Tears.' Soon the distractions of Rome are succeeded by other cares; with the burden of a large and increasing monastic family to support, she finds what it is never to have a moment to herself, to belong to everybody, and to feel that the whole weight of the very existence of her houses in those difficult times rested upon her. Flying from human miseries, she yet is saddened by their strife; a Roman herself, she is compelled to witness the destruction of her

country, and to hear of terrible and unheard-of calamities falling on all she held most dear; in the midst of all this, failing health, continual bodily sufferings; then, opposition to her work, persecutions, the contradictions of tongues; and all the while bearing within her mother's heart, which remained ever keenly sensitive to the strokes of sorrow. And God sent her periodically, as it were, these terrible blows, by taking away from her—first Blesilla, then Rufina, then Paulina—so that her maternal heart was pierced by a threefold sword of sorrow. Such had been, till the year 400, Paula's life—a long uninterrupted succession of sorrows, trials, and mortifications—in fact, a long martyrdom. It is in the midst of all these trials that one of the most striking features in her character shone forth with the greatest lustre—strength, strength in tenderness—hence her resignation under such repeated blows of the Divine hand, and which was all the more wonderful from her excessive natural sensibility; hence her austerities, which took the place of a soft and luxurious life; hence her devoted charity and renunciation; her heroic sacrifices, breaking through every tie to obey the imperial call of her vocation; her ardour in prayer and in work; her vigilant, tender, and yet in some ways severe government of her monastery; her gentleness in the midst of persecutions; her patience in bearing physical as well as mental agonies—all those admirable characteristics, in fact, which we have recorded in her life. But in her closing years her virtues grew with her martyrdom, till everything earthly about her had become purified and prepared for the great change.

The next grief which came upon her was the death of Fabiola. But here it was a sorrow mingled with joy, for this death was a real triumph. When she felt her end approaching, Fabiola hastened to distribute among

the poor all that remained to her of worldly goods; she called it 'laying down her burden to go lighter to heaven.' And when she was borne to her last home, Rome was moved as one man; the crowd which followed her funeral car, composed of the poor whom for so many years she had fed and tended, filled the streets, the windows, and even to the very roofs of the houses, singing her praises and blessing her memory. In the churches they sang the Alleluias.[1] Oceanus, who had accompanied Fabiola in her visit to the Holy Land, wrote all the details of her funeral to her friends at Bethlehem, and Jerome answered him by a letter, in which, while dwelling eloquently on the virtues of their common friend, he placed this ovation far above the ancient Roman triumphs. He looked upon it as the triumph of Christianity, which was to conquer the Conqueror of Rome and save society. In concluding his letter Jerome addressed the following touching adieu to Fabiola: 'Receive, O Fabiola, this last homage from an old man; this last tribute which he wishes to pay to your memory. I have often praised virgins, widows, spouses, whose robes have been always white, and who have followed the Lamb whithersoever He went. You had fallen into the hands of thieves, but Jesus Christ brought you back on His shoulder. There are many mansions in our heavenly Father's house. Where sin abounded, there did grace much more abound; for to whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much.'[2]

Another death which came to sadden Paula after that

[1] This spectacle of a whole people accompanying the funeral procession of Fabiola's remains was renewed only a few years ago, when all Rome flocked to the funeral of the young Princess Borghese, when the horses were taken out of the hearse by the crowd, so that they might themselves bear the body of their benefactress to her last resting-place. —Ozanam, *Civilisation in the Fifth Century*, 14th chapter.

[2] *Epist.* 84, *Ad Oceanum.*

of Fabiola was that of St. Epiphanius. On coming back from Constantinople, where his zeal for the faith had led him, during the long sea passage, from which his old age had not recoiled, the suffering caused by a heavy sea, and his grief at the intrigues of which he had been a witness, and which had surprised for an instant even his own good faith, exhausted the little strength which remained to him. He died while praying with the two priests who accompanied him on the deck of the ship. He was one holy bishop the more in heaven; but also he was to Paula a revered father and guide, whose loss could not be replaced to her on earth.

Great as was her distress at this loss, however, the fresh and crowning stroke in her cup of sorrow was the death of her only son Toxotius, who was taken from her in the prime of youth, and just as he was fulfilling her fondest expectations. God, before calling her to Himself, exacted of her this last sacrifice. Who can say what she suffered? His young widow, like Pammachius on the death of Paulina, made a vow of perpetual widowhood, and showed to Rome an example of all the virtues which Paula practised at Bethlehem. Paula had at least this consolation; but what was left to her on earth but pain?

To all these sorrows were added bodily sufferings, the result of uninterrupted austerities, which gave her no respite during the concluding years of her life; but they only served to call forth fresh treasures of patience and sublime words of courage and resignation. 'When I am weak, then am I strong,' she would exclaim. 'We must resign ourselves to bear our treasure in earthen vessels until the day when this miserable mortal body shall be clothed with immortality. If the sufferings of Christ abound in us, our consolations abound too. Com-

panions of His passion, we shall be equally so of His glory.'

Through all these sufferings she arrived at a greater detachment than ever from earthly things. For many years she had judged life at its true value, but as her end drew near, as the world faded from her view, and sorrows multiplied around her, she groaned at the prolongation of her exile on this earth; 'where light resembles darkness,' she would exclaim. 'The Divine Light shines in the darkness, but the darkness cannot receive it.' 'No! do not let us love this world, or the things of this world; for everything that is in the world, the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life, is not of God; and the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof.'

Her longing for her heavenly home increased in a like proportion. 'We are but strangers and pilgrims on this earth,' she would exclaim. 'Alas! how my exile is prolonged! My soul is a stranger among the tents of Kedar. Who shall give me the wings of a dove, that I may flee away and be at rest?'

Added to this disgust of the world and longing for heaven, she felt that weariness which Bossuet calls the inexorable *ennui* which forms the groundwork of human life, and which becomes with the saints a special suffering, because it proceeds from a juster appreciation of human things and a stronger love for God. St. Chantal called it 'the martyrdom of love and of generous hearts, who suffer more by consenting to live in accordance with the will of God than if they were to give a thousand lives.'[1]

Paula, towards the close of her life, felt this trial more than ever; but her courage was only thereby the more manifested, and in the midst of the greatest in-

[1] *Histoire de Ste. Chantal*, by M. l'Abbé Bougaud, t. ii. p. 441.

terior anguish and desolation, 'hymns of praise,' writes St. Jerome, 'rose from her lips.' 'Why art thou sad, O my soul? and why is my spirit disquieted? Hope in God; for I will still give praise to Him, who is the salvation of my countenance, and my God.' She was soon to close her hymn in the bosom of God. She was thoroughly exhausted; her tears, her labours, her penances, her love, had consumed her bit by bit; and the trials of the last few months had purified her soul and brought it to an extraordinary pitch of perfection. She no longer seemed to be on earth. A beautiful look of peace and joy suffused itself over her whole countenance. 'Who could relate,' exclaimed Jerome, 'without tears, how Paula died? And yet it must be done. Courage, my soul! courage!' and he then wrote a letter which has been ever since the consolation of Christian souls, and which St. Chantal, when dying, begged to have read to her again and again. Not being able to sleep the last night of her life, she called for this letter of Jerome's, listened to every word, and exclaimed, 'What are we, after all? Nothing but miserable atoms alongside of those great religious.'[1]

It was towards the end of the year 403 that Paula was seized with her last sickness. When the danger became imminent every one at Bethlehem was inconsolable. Eustochium, who had never been separated from her mother since her birth, and whose whole life was indissolubly bound up in hers, could not bear the idea that she was about to lose her. She would not let any one nurse her but herself. Night and day she watched by her dying bed, fanning her, supporting her head, rubbing her feet, giving her cooling drinks, making her bed—in fact, doing every office of a sick-nurse with the

[1] *Histoire de Ste. Chantal*, by M. l'Abbé Bougaud, t. ii. p. 520.

most devoted love and delicate care. At times she would rush from the dying bed to the altar of the Manger, and there implore our Lord with tears not to deprive her of such a mother; or, if she must die, to let her go too, so that both might rest in the same tomb.

But neither prayers nor tears could arrest the hour marked out by God. 'Paula,' wrote St. Jerome, 'had finished her course; she had kept the faith; the hour was come for her to receive her crown, and to follow the Lamb whithersoever He went. She had hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and she was about to be filled; and already she could exclaim, "All that we have heard of the city of God we are now about to see with our eyes." She had wept enough; the moment of eternal joy was at hand. She had worn a hair shirt too long; it was time for her to put on a robe of glory, and to exclaim, "Thou hast clothed me with a robe of gladness." She had eaten her bread with ashes, and mingled her drink with weeping; it was time that she should go and be fed with the bread of angels, and be able for ever to say those words: "Taste and see how sweet the Lord is!"'[1]

In truth, her strength was exhausted, and she had only a few hours more to live. They had taken from her her hard couch and put her in a soft bed at the beginning of her illness, and she consented to let them do what they would, grateful for all Eustochium's loving services, but entirely absorbed in the thought of the heaven which was about to open to her. But her illness made the most rapid progress. Already death had frozen the lower part of her limbs; only a faint beating of the heart indicated that Paula still breathed, and at times she murmured feebly these verses of her favourite Psalms:

[1] *Epitaph. Paulæ.*

'Lord, I have loved the beauty of Thy house. How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! I have chosen rather to be an abject in the house of my God than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners.' The Bishop of Jerusalem and all the bishops of Palestine, together with an immense number of priests, monks, and virgins, had hastened to assist at her holy and beautiful death. The monastery was full. Paula, entirely absorbed in God, heard and saw nothing of what was going on around her. Sometimes, by the slight trembling of her lips, they saw that she was holding communication with God. They asked her some questions; she did not answer. Jerome then drew near and asked her why she was silent? if anything troubled her? She replied in Greek, 'Oh no—neither pain nor regret; I feel, on the contrary, a supreme peace.' Then she relapsed again into silence, and closed not only her lips but her eyes, as if to shut out everything of this earth. With her finger she often made the sign of the cross. Then the agony began—her breathing became hard and difficult—and yet her soul, in its efforts to escape from its prison, found vent in words of prayer and praise even to her last breath. All of a sudden she opened her eyes; from the midst of the shadows of death a sudden brightness lit up her face in the most extraordinary manner, and her look seemed fixed on a celestial vision. It was one, in fact. She saw our Lord, and heard Him address her in the appeal of the Spouse of the Canticles: 'Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come: for winter is now past, the rain is over and gone.' The watchers understood that our Lord had thus spoken to her, for she replied joyously, 'The flowers have appeared in our land—the time of pruning is come.' And then suddenly crying out with a loud voice, 'I see the good things of the Lord in the land of

the living,' she expired.[1] It was the evening, just after the setting of the sun of January 26, 404, under the 6th consulate of the Emperor Honorius. Paula had lived fifty-six years eight months and twenty-one days; of which five had been spent in Rome after her widowhood, and twenty at Bethlehem, in her holy profession of the religious life, under the shadow of the cradle of the Son of God.

Around this bed of death, tears and sobs were less heard than hymns and psalms sung in all languages of East and West. Her obsequies were triumphal. She was first borne to the Church of the Manger, where the body was exposed for three days to the veneration of the faithful, the face being uncovered. Bishops vied with each other for the honour of carrying her body; those whose shoulders did not receive this precious burden walked before and after, bearing tapers and chanting Psalms. The crowd was immense; but the most royal part of the funeral escort was the poor. They were there in hundreds, crying out that they had lost their mother and their preserver; the widows showing the clothes she had made for them, after the manner of Dorcas; the children sobbing and crying.

The saint remained three days exposed, and during all that time no change appeared in her features; and her pale face was lit up with so supernatural a beauty and dignity, that the people could not take their eyes off her face, and believed she was only sweetly sleeping. Afterwards her body was laid under the church, in a grotto attached to that of the Manger, which she had so

[1] Statimque ut audivit Sponsum vocantem: *Surge, veni, speciosa mea, columba mea, quoniam ecce hiems transiit et recessit, pluvia abiit*, læta respondit: *Flores viri sunt in terrâ, tempus sectionis advénit*; et: *Credo videre bona Domini in terra viventium.—Epitaph. Paulæ.*

fondly loved, and where her tomb is seen to this day. The grief of Eustochium during those days was most touching. She could not bear to leave her mother's body, and remained at the side of the bier, sometimes kissing her eyes, clinging to her neck, and imploring those around her to bury her in the same grave. Jerome strove to console her, although his own heart was well-nigh broken. 'Your mother,' he said, 'was a martyr, and she is now receiving the palm in heaven. For it is not only death for the faith which makes a martyr; the immaculate life of a soul who serves God with love and purity is a martyrdom too, and one of every day. If a martyrdom of blood has its crown of roses and violets, the other has its crown of lilies; whether one triumphs for God in the bloody strife of the arena or in the struggles of daily life, the reward is the same. Your holy mother heard the voice of God calling her as He did Abraham, "Go forth out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall shew thee." She came and stayed here till the last hour of her life. And that is why to-day, surrounded with a choir of virgins, she enters the city of the Lord, and from humble Bethlehem has passed to a celestial kingdom.' [1]

But not less bitter than Eustochium's was Jerome's own sorrow. He had lost many dear friends, and wept over many tombs: Lea, Blesilla, Paulina, Nepotian, Fabiola, Toxotius; he had seen them all die one after the other; but none had affected him like the death of

[1] Mater tua longo martyrio coronata est.—*Epitaph. Paulæ.* It is the same expression used in the Roman Martyrology: '*Apud Bethlehem Judæ, dormitio Sanctæ Paulæ viduæ, matris Eustochii Virginis Christi. Quæ cum esset ex nobilissimo senatorum genere, renuntians sæculo, et facultates suas pauperibus distribuens, ad præsepe Domini se recessit; ubi multis virtutibus prædita et longo coronata martyrio, ad cælestia regna transiit.*'

Paula. This austere and noble soul, so hardened by struggles and penance, was yet completely overwhelmed by this blow, and for a long time his great works were interrupted. 'I have not been able to write anything even on the Holy Scriptures,' he exclaims to Theophilus, who was urging him to translate his paschal letters, 'since the death of the holy and venerable Paula. You know that she was my great stay and consolation here below; and that of many others, who found in her a most devoted and generous mother.'

He found some consolation in composing two epitaphs in hexameter verses, in praise of the saint, to be engraved, one on her tomb and the other on the entrance to the grotto. This is a free translation of the inscription engraved by St. Jerome on Paula's sepulchre:—

'The daughter of the Scipios, of the Pauli, of the Gracchi, of the illustrious blood of Agamemnon, rests in this spot. She bore the name of Paula. She was the mother of Eustochium. The first in the senate of noble Roman matrons, she preferred the poverty of Christ and the humble fields of Bethlehem to the splendours of Rome.'[1]

This great and simple contrast, like the life of Paula, said everything. The humility of Jesus Christ substituted for the glories of earth; Roman and Pagan pride buried in the manger; the most complete immolation in the strongest love—that is Paula all through. The epitaph engraved by Jerome at the entrance of the grotto on the rock was a reproduction of the same idea:—

'Dost thou see this grotto hewn out of the rock? It

[1] Scipio quam genuit, Pauli fudere parentes,
Gracchorum soboles, Agamemnonis inclyta proles,
Hoc jacet in tumulo; Paulam dixere priores;
Eustochii genitrix, Romani prima Senatûs,
Pauperiem Christi et Bethlehemitica rura secuta.

is the tomb of Paula, an inhabitant of the kin heaven. Her brother, her family, Rome, her co her riches, her children—all were left for the grot Bethlehem: here she is buried. And here, O Chi is Thy cradle, where the magi came to offer Thee the mystic presents, O Son of God!'[1]

Eustochium entreated Jerome, beside these two epitaphs, to write the funeral oration for her mother, as he had done for Lea, Nepotian, and Fabiola. Jerome felt it was a mournful duty, and tried to set to work; but in vain. Each time he took up his style and tablets, his grief seemed to be renewed, his eyes filled with tears, and his style fell from his trembling hands. He was obliged to have recourse to a stranger hand, and dictated during two successive nights of vigil, without stopping, the writing from whence we have drawn the greater part of the details of the grand and beautiful life we have striven to portray. 'O, Paula, adieu!' he concludes. 'Help with your prayers the failing old age of one who so deeply revered you. United to Christ as you are now, by the merit of your faith and your works, you will be far more powerful up there than you were here below. . . . . I have raised a monument to you more durable than brass, and which time will not destroy. I have engraved this funeral oration, O Paula, on the rock of your sepulchre, and I add it to these pages, so that in whatever spot they may be found, posterity may know that your memory is honoured in Bethlehem, and that your ashes rest there.'

[1] Adspicis angustum præcisâ rupe sepulcrum?
Hospitium Paulæ est, celestia regna tenentis.
Fratrem, cognatos, Romam, patriamque relinquens,
Divitias, sobolem, Bethlehemiti conditur antro.
Hic præsepe tuum, Christe; atque hic mystica Magi
Munera portantes, hominique Deoque dedere.

by Jerome's writing, and by others who have
. this venerable and holy lady, we trust we
ceeded in describing her in her austere and pure
yet shaded with sorrow; with a character tender
t strong; Roman and Christian at one and the
time; tempering the severe dignity of a patrician
the humility of a penitent and a solitary; throwing
self into the highest paths of virtue, with the genero-
y of a soul to whom what is small and mediocre would
e impossible. Touching in her love as a wife, in her
grief as a widow, and in her terrible trials as a mother;
more admirable still in her heroic renunciations, her
entire sacrifices, and her inexhaustible charities, she was
raised to the highest pitch of perfection and holiness by
a supernatural love which lifted her above all human
affections. This royal love of Christ consumed, as in a
fire, her many earthly sufferings, and brought her soul
into a state of detachment and purification which edified
the whole Church, and served as an example to a mul-
titude of other virgins and widows, to whom she was as
a bright and shining light, until she fell asleep in the
peaceful, holy, and beautiful manner we have described.

CHAPTER XXIII.

PAULA'S MONASTERIES UNTIL THE DEATH OF JEROME AND EUSTOCHIUM.

PAULA'S great work did not die with her, and did not perish in her daughter's hands. It is true that, in addition to her sorrow, Eustochium felt with horror the burden of care and responsibility which henceforth must rest upon her shoulders. Paula at her death possessed absolutely nothing, and had left to her daughter not only a large number of brothers and sisters in the two monasteries entirely unprovided for, but also heavy debts contracted for her innumerable charities, and which there were no funds whatever to liquidate. Another great anxiety to Eustochium was the government of the Community, in which, as long as Paula lived, she had had no share. Still, she never thought for an instant of repudiating her mother's heritage; or of abandoning Jerome in his old age (for he was now more than seventy), or the holy virgins to whom she had been so long a sister; or the hospital for the pilgrims, the care of the poor, the orphans, and the widows who had so long depended on the help given by the convent.

But Divine Providence in which she trusted did not desert her in this terrible strait. An unexpected help and consolation arrived from the West in the person of her niece, the young daughter of Læta and Toxotius,

who, as we have already seen, was to be confided, when old enough, to Eustochium's care. The great wealth which the young Paula's parents still possessed at Ravenna, in Sicily, and Africa, became the salvation of, as well as a permanent income for, the Bethlehem monasteries.

To help Eustochium in the government of her Community St. Jerome set to work and translated for her benefit the monastic rules of St. Pachomius; and then, urged by Eustochium herself, and by his promise to one whose every wish was now sacred to him, Jerome recommenced with wonderful courage and energy the completion of his Biblical works. There was not much left to do: Joshua and the Book of Judges had been already translated: then the charming history of Ruth, of which the scene was laid in the fields near Bethlehem, and which was so applicable to Eustochium herself, whose whole life had been a commentary on those beautiful words of the gentle Moabitess to Naomi—'Whithersoever thou shalt go, I will go: and where thou shalt dwell, I also will dwell. Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.' 'Now that our holy and venerable Paula sleeps in the Lord,' he writes in his preface to these translations, 'I cannot refuse you, Eustochium, virgin of Christ, the works I promised to your mother.' Thus towards the end of the year 405, after fifteen years of labour, the first and only authorised version of Holy Scriptures in the Latin tongue, translated directly from the Hebrew text, was completed; and soon after, under the name of the Vulgate, adopted by the Church in the last universal council.

His commentaries, however, were still unfinished. Of the twelve minor prophets, five were incomplete. Jerome set to work, and soon after the publication of the Vulgate they were done. Then he began the greater

prophets; but 'Isaiah is so difficult,' complained Jerome, 'that the most careful and diffuse explanations are always too short.' 'One goes on from one obscure passage to another; we may well say that "the Spirit breatheth where it will, and we know not whence He cometh or whither He goeth."' But he could not bear the thought of leaving it unfinished. 'No,' exclaimed the venerable hermit; 'as long as a breath remains in my body, *dum spiritus hos regit artus*, I will use it to complete my explanation of the prophets.'

The first he began was Daniel; and hardly was that finished than Eustochium renewed her entreaties for Isaiah. 'All the sublimest mysteries of Holy Writ, all that the mind of man can conceive and the tongue of man express, is there.'[1] But he had promised Paula to do it, and though he was now nearly eighty, he persevered. The labour was long and arduous; copyists were wanting; but his courage grew under difficulties. 'Let us go into the cloud with Moses,' he exclaimed, 'and come back if we can like him, our forehead shining with light. Let us study these lightnings and thunders a little closer which the vulgar herd hears from a distance without seeing.' A great serenity seems to have come over his soul, and he soars above the miserable critics who assailed him. 'Let Envy have her swing,' he repeated, 'and say to God, "Scatter the people, O Lord, who delight in war." For God loves peace—that peace which passeth all understanding.'

He had arrived at about half his commentaries on Isaiah when his Roman friends wrote to claim those on Ezekiel. At this moment he was seized with a serious

[1] Universa Domini sacramenta, quidquid sanctarum est Scripturarum, quidquid potest humana lingua proferre, et mortalium sensus accipere, isto volumine continetur.—*Præf.* lib. i.

illness, which threatened to interrupt everything. Eustochium redoubled her prayers, and the indefatigable old man did not wait for perfect recovery to resume his labours. 'I am like a man at sea,' he wrote in his preface to Ezekiel, 'always tempest-tost or dreading a storm. That is why, O model of noble virtue on this earth, Eustochium, that your heart ceases not to cry aloud to God, so that, helped by your prayers, I may accomplish the task which you impose upon me. But until God gives me back my health I can only dictate painfully a few pages.'

But it was not only the blows of sickness which weakened his body: public misfortunes weighed heavily on this great soul. The barbarians were successfully invading Italy and surrounding Rome as with an iron circle; in a short time they would be within its sacred walls. 'The Lord, who is sending His judgments on the earth,' he wrote, 'is likewise trying this earthly body of mine, of which it is written, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." I have had solemn warning of the near approach of my last hour. But after having thus touched me with His hand, He has all of a sudden given me back my health, to fill me with a wholesome fear of His judgments without striking me to the earth. Since, then, my rest is deferred—perhaps that I may finish my work—I mean to give myself up to it entirely; while from my observatory I contemplate the agitated sea of this world, my eye fixed, not on the present moment, but on the eternal future. You then, Eustochium, who have obtained my cure by your prayers, obtain for me likewise the grace and light to pierce through the mysteries contained in these books, and to glean the great lessons given us by the Word of God,

which we hear, not with the ears of the flesh, but of the soul.'[1]

Having at last finished the Book of Isaiah, he wrote the following dedication: 'It is to you, O Eustochium, my daughter, and to the memory of your sainted mother, that I dedicate this last book on the prophet Isaiah. I owe the dedication as much to her as to you; for as long as she lived she never ceased helping me and encouraging me in the work.'[2] From Isaiah he passed on, as his friends had wished, to Ezekiel. But hardly had he begun his commentary when the terrible news which arrived from the West froze the very words on his lips. Rome, that city which had ever been looked upon with a kind of superstitious veneration, and which seemed protected by an inviolable majesty, besieged and insulted by the barbarians, had at last been taken by assault. And Alaric, having first exacted a fabulous ransom from the inhabitants, had given up the city for three days to fire, sword, and pillage. When the details of this horrible catastrophe reached Bethlehem, Jerome's sorrow burst forth in the bitterest lamentations. 'She is extinct, then, this light of the world!' he exclaimed. 'The head of the Roman Empire is cut off. By the destruction of this one city the universe itself is shaken;' and quoting the Book of Isaiah, he continued, '*The wall of Moab is taken in the night, it is silent:*[3] *who will ever be able to recount the horrors of this cruel night?* Who can sufficiently lament such calamities? She is thrown down, this noble city, the queen of all nations.[4] . . . It

[1] Præf. in lib. xiv. [2] Præf. in lib. xviii.

[3] Moab nocte capta est, nocte cecidit murus ejus.—*Isaiæ* xv. 1–5.

[4] Quis cladem illius noctis, quis funera fando
Explicet, aut possit lacrymis æquare labores?
Urbs antiqua ruit, multos dominata per annos.
Virg *Æneid*, lib. ii.

is incredible! Rome, enriched with the spoils of the whole world, this fierce sovereign of nations, is become the sepulchre of her people; and all the shores of the east of Egypt and of Africa are covered with her fugitive children.'

And very soon, as Jerome had foreseen, troops of exiles arrived at Bethlehem. It was the most melancholy sight! Old patricians, consuls, noble matrons, widows, virgins, flying from the sword of the barbarians and the utter ruin of their country, came, in the last stage of misery, to implore shelter in Paula's monasteries. Jerome gave up everything to succour his afflicted countrymen: the priests were lodged in the monastery; Eustochium received the virgins and widows in her convent. The rest were placed in the hospital, which soon was full to overflowing. But it was impossible to help them all. 'Bethlehem,' he exclaimed, 'sees the noblest blood in Rome begging at her doors. . . . Alas! our resources are exhausted, we can only give them our sympathy, and mingle our tears with theirs.' In this terrible calamity, besides, their dearest friends had perished. Pammachius and Marcella were among the number. Nothing is known of the last moments of Pammachius; his memory has remained blessed in the Church of God, which has placed him among the saints.[1] But Jerome has given us a touching account of the death of Marcella, a death worthy of a Roman and a Christian. During the sack of Rome, a body of Goths broke into her palace on Mount Aventine. They hunted everywhere for gold in this splendid palace, and found none; so, believing it was concealed, they demanded it with threats and cries. Marcella bravely went forward to meet them: she had a far more precious treasure to preserve, the young and

[1] The Church keeps his feast on August 30.

beautiful Principia, who had taken Eustochium's place when the latter left Rome. 'What do you want?' she asked the barbarians; 'gold?' And showing them the coarse robe she wore, she continued, 'A woman dressed like me has none.' The Goths, irritated at her answer, threw her down and beat her cruelly. 'Do with me what you will,' she exclaimed. 'Take what you will—all here is yours.' Then rising with superhuman energy, and clasping the sobbing Principia in her arms, 'But this one,' she cried out, with a voice which intimidated even the barbarians—'this one, in the name of God, you shall not touch!' The Goths were awed by these words, and refrained. Strangely enough, the only power which seemed to impose on the barbarians was that of the holy Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, whose tomb was Rome's safeguard. By a curious feeling of superstitious respect, these half-Christian Goths preserved the basilicas, which became asylums, where the trembling Romans huddled together for safety, and which Alaric himself did not dare violate. Still more strange was it to see the conquerors carrying there respectfully the sacred vessels they had found in other churches. Marcella and Principia were, in a like manner, conducted to the Vatican by the Goths themselves; so that Principia was saved. But Marcella did not recover the shock, and the next day gave up her great soul to God.[1]

In the midst of all this misery, what became of Jerome's work? 'Either we must shut the door,' he exclaimed, 'or give up the commentaries.' Encouraged by Eustochium, however, he determined to rob from the night the hours which the day could no longer afford, and by the light of a little lamp he dictated rapidly.

[1] The Roman Martyrology celebrates the Feast of St. Marcella on January 31.

Unfortunately, his eyes, weakened by old age and sorrow, refused to serve him, he could no longer decipher the crabbed Hebrew MS., so that the brothers of the monastery had to read the different versions to him out loud. However, nothing daunted, the work was at last achieved, and only the prophet Jeremiah remained. But in the midst of this fresh and last labour he was interrupted by a new and dangerous heresy. Pelagius appeared, and attacked not only this or that doctrine, but the very basis of Christianity, by denying the consequences of original sin and the necessity of grace; thus altering the true idea of the mystery of the redemption. This heresy, which pretended to be a proud re-vindication of the liberty of man, spread rapidly in the Church, but found two powerful adversaries in the East and West—St. Augustine, whose reputation was then at its height, and St. Jerome, that formidable and aged athlete for the faith, 'the man from whom a single word was waited for as an oracle,' as the young Paul Orosius said, in a synod held in Palestine, and who had hastened from the borders of the ocean to the shores of Africa to consult Augustine on the Pelagian heresy, and had been sent by him to Jerome as to a 'consummate master' of Divine doctrine. Jerome had already published against Pelagius his letter to Ctesiphon, besides his famous 'Dialogue'; while Augustine had written those two beautiful books which earned him the title of 'Doctor of Grace.' Their joint combats for the faith drew still closer the links of affection which bound these two great men together. Jerome was enchanted with Augustine's work, and wrote to him from his solitude, 'We may dispute sometimes on matters of science, but we shall not give the enemies of the Church the sight of a division between us. Every one knows how I love you, how I revere and admire you, and how I defend your

writings as if they were my own.' And again, 'I have always revered your Grace, and felt that the Spirit of God dwelt in you; but to-day you have, if possible, crowned the admiration I have for you. There is not an hour when your name does not rise to my lips. Courage! Your name fills the whole world. Catholics bless you as the prop of the Catholic faith; and, what is more glorious still, the heretics detest you. They pursue me with the same hatred, and not having been able to put me to death with their swords, they now only pray for my dissolution.'[1]

In truth, Jerome, and Eustochium herself, nearly paid with their lives the forfeit for their struggles for the faith. One day, thanks to the powerlessness of the imperial administration, which made every disorder possible, and the inaction of the Bishop of Jerusalem, who had not entirely abjured his old enmity against Jerome, a troop of bandits, in the pay of the Pelagians, attacked the Bethlehem monasteries. Blood flowed, Paula's beautiful monasteries were burnt to the ground, and Eustochium and Jerome only escaped, thanks to the strength of the tower, which the assailants could not force. This odious plot revolted the whole Christian world, and was exposed by St. Augustine with all the indignation which filled his soul. The Bishop of Jerusalem kept quiet and abstained from any intervention, so that no inquiry was made. What was most admirable in this sad affair was the touching resignation of the victims. We do not know where they found refuge: but neither this act of unprecedented violence, nor the sight of the ruined monasteries, nor the strange conduct of the Bishop of Jerusalem, could arouse any bitterness in Eustochium's heart, nor even in Jerome's. They wrote

[1] *Epist.* 80, '*Ad August.*'

to Pope Innocent to give him an account of these events and implore his protection; but their letter to the Pope was rather an expression of fear for the future than of accusation for the past. They abstained from naming any one; only, as victims of an odious plot which had remained unpunished, and exposed to the renewal of similar insults, they begged for security for the future. The Pope wrote to the Bishop of Jerusalem and to Jerome two letters, in which one sees how he had been moved, not only by the impious violence of their adversaries, but by the generosity of the Bethlehem sufferers.

The monasteries were quickly rebuilt,[1] and Eustochium brought back her sisters and Jerome his monks. Perhaps they were aided in this work by the children of their old rival, Melania, who, having passed from Africa into the Holy Land at the very time of the Pelagian invasion, inhabited two monasteries on the Mount of Olives. A tender intimacy sprang up between the new emigrants and Paula's monasteries; and Jerome and Augustine in their letters speak of Eustochium and the young Paula, Albina, and Melania, and send messages of affection to each as if they were all members of one family.

Three years after the arrival of Melania's children, Paula's holy daughter, Eustochium, sweetly fell asleep in the Lord, and realised the promises which, thirty years before, Jerome had made her, at the time of her heroic novitiate to the religious life in Rome. 'Transport yourself in thought,' he wrote, 'to that last hour when you will receive the reward of all your present labours. What a day, O Eustochium when the

[1] We do not know the history of the Bethlehem convents after the death of Jerome, but we believe they subsisted till the time of the Mussulman invasion.

Blessed Virgin will come and meet you with a choir of angels; when your Spouse Himself will come forward to receive you; when all the holy women and saints of the old and new dispensations will hasten before you, and with them, triumphant with joy, you will see your two mothers, the one according to nature, the other to grace!'

Eustochium was buried, according to her earnest wish, in the same tomb as her mother, so that the two so tenderly and closely united in life were equally so in death.[1]

This was Jerome's last sorrow. The following year, 420, he slept also in the Lord, loaded with years and honours. Christian art, with a rare inspiration, has represented the old athlete for the faith at the point of death: he is supported in the arms of some of his disciples, his body bent by years and infirmities; but his look is still full of fire, and his soul, by a supreme effort, raises his failing body as if to spring upwards towards God. The young Paula, then twenty years old, closed his eyes, and laid him near Paula and Eustochium, in that grotto which to-day bears his name; and as a pious guardian she watched over those sacred tombs until the day, to us unknown, when she herself went to rejoin those great souls in the bosom of God.

'In the oratory of St. Jerome,' writes M. de Chateaubriand, 'a picture has been placed in which the saint is represented with the same expression as in the painting of Domenichino. Another picture hangs close by repre-

[1] The Church celebrates the Feast of St. Eustochium on September 26, two days before that of St. Jerome. The Roman Martyrology praises this humble virgin in the following terms: *Eodem die, S. Eustochii virginis, filiæ Sanctæ Paulæ; quæ ad Præsepe Domini cum aliis virginibus enutrita, præclaris meritis fulgens, migravit ad Dominum.*

senting Paula and Eustochium. These two descendants of Scipio are represented dead and laid in the same tomb. By a touching thought, the painter has given the two saints an exact resemblance. One distinguishes the daughter from the mother only by her youth and her white veil. Eustochium, in fact, cannot be separated from Paula: she was moulded upon her mother's image. She appears to us, it is true, as only a reflection of a greater light; but under this modest gentle guise it is easy to detect the strength, the generosity, and the courage which made her worthy of being the daughter of so great a saint.'

The learned tell us that among the stars which we see in the firmament on a fine night, some of the most brilliant are double ones, and hide two stars in the same lustre. In the same way I should describe Paula and Eustochium: they are two, mother and daughter; but there is such harmony in their light and such unity in their rays that they are confounded in our sight, and we behold in the heavens but one constellation, and that one of the most splendid and beautiful.

Happy should we be if we could turn many souls towards the contemplation of this bright star! not only great souls like Paula's, but also feeble, sad, and suffering hearts, of which there are so many on this earth. Paula would soothe their griefs; she would wipe away their tears; she would stretch out a hand to help them in their weakness and discouragement, and would teach them how, by the generous love of God, they would renew their failing strength, and mount up, bit by bit, to the highest levels of sanctity.

LIFE OF ST. OLYMPIAS.

'Mulieres possunt esse milites Christi.'
ST. JOAN. CHRYS. Op. 1718, T. 11.

G.S.

LIFE OF ST. OLYMPIAS.

St. Chrysostom, writing to a widow lady named Italica, to whom St. Augustine likewise addressed several letters still extant, and recommending certain wants of the Church to her care, expresses himself in the following remarkable manner :—

'The duties of women as regards spiritual matters are altogether different from those which relate to worldly things. In the latter there is necessarily a great distinction between men and women. Men labour in public in the senate, at the bar, in the field—while women stop at home and have the care of the house and the children. But when it is a question of labouring for the cause of God, and for the interests of His Church, women very often work with greater zeal and with even far more efficiency than men. St. Paul himself cites them as an example, and often attributes the success of his apostolate to their co-operation and ministration.'

No fitter illustration of his theory can be found than in the life of St. Olympias, who was to St. Chrysostom what St. Paula was to St. Jerome, and whom St. Gregory Nazianzen calls 'the glory of the widows in the Eastern Church.'

She shed over Constantinople the same lustre as St. Marcella at Rome and St. Melania at Jerusalem, with the additional honour of being called upon to suffer much,

both in her own person and for the cause of the holy patriarch who was her spiritual father and friend. St. Amphilochius and Palladius have rivalled St. John Chrysostom in extolling her talents and her piety, and the latter does not hesitate to honour her with the title of 'Confessor'—so great were her sufferings for the Church.

She was born at Constantinople in 368, of a noble but Pagan family, who were addicted to the luxury and vice which at that time characterised the Roman aristocracy. Her father was Count of Seleucia, and her mother was the daughter of Ablave, Prefect of the Pretorian guards and Master of the Emperor's household. This Ablave was a great favourite of the Emperor Constantine, and by his marriage had become all-powerful; for his wife is said to have been the widow of Arsaces, King of Armenia, and originally betrothed to Constantine himself. Honours and dignities of all sorts were not wanting, therefore, in the early home of the little Olympias; but God, who had special designs on this child, would not suffer her to remain long in this corrupting and idolatrous atmosphere. Both her parents died when she was very young, and she was placed under the care and guardianship of Procopius, her uncle by the mother's side, a Christian, and moreover an intimate friend of St. Gregory Nazianzen. He had married a daughter of the Emperor Valens, and was Prefect of Constantinople. Of his excellence and high character there seems to be no doubt; but he was rough and rude in manner, and an old biographer speaks of him, 'qu'il avait plus de droiture que de politesse et qu'il ne sçavait pas bien plaire aux courtisans.'

What was wanting, however, in tenderness and gentleness for the training of the orphan child was

supplied by Theodosia, the sister of St. Amphilochius, to whose care Procopius intrusted her, and in whom St. Olympias affirms that 'she saw as in a glass the practice of all virtues.' Theodosia gave herself up heart and soul to the education and training of this gifted child, whose great natural cleverness, uncommon beauty, and large fortune rendered her a charge of no small importance.

St. Gregory Nazianzen, writing to Olympias as a girl, tells her that having always before her eyes this living model of piety and goodness, she must strive to conform to her example in word and deed. But St. Gregory himself seems to have undertaken her spiritual instruction during the three years he spent at Constantinople (from 379 to 382), always writing of her as of 'his own child Olympias,' and she of him as of 'her dear spiritual father.'

Olympias was then between twelve and fourteen years of age, and already gave promise of the wonderful piety to which she afterwards attained. She took for her model a holy virgin named Silvia, who was the sister of Rufinus, Prefect of the East, and a great personage in the household of the Emperor Theodorus. This Silvia was in the same station of life as Olympias, and surrounded with everything which wealth and luxury could produce. Yet she contrived so completely to live above it all, and to mortify her senses, that she arrived at a sanctity which was as rare as it was admirable. She was very clever, but her great delight was in reading serious books, especially in the study of the Holy Scriptures, to which she devoted many hours of the night. Compelled by her position to mix in the world and act as mistress of her brother's house, she made up for the time thus lost by depriving herself of sleep, rarely even lying down on her bed, but taking such rest as was absolutely

necessary on the floor. Palladius states that once, when she was travelling with him from Jerusalem to Egypt, though she was upwards of sixty years of age, she never would allow herself a bath (that great necessity in hot countries); and in order to mortify herself still further, rarely washed anything but her hands, and that only before receiving Holy Communion. On one occasion, a young gentleman named Jovinius, who was accompanying her on her journey, on arriving at their halting-place, took a great deal of pains to procure a bath and fresh water, after which he laid himself down to rest in a delicately prepared bed. Silvia reproved him severely, saying, 'What! are you petting your body like that? Do you not know that if you do not punish it as a slave it will soon become your master? Have a little moral courage, and blush to do and suffer less than a woman of my age!' This rebuke had a wholesome effect, and Jovinius afterwards became a great saint and Bishop of Ascalon.

Olympias, in addition to her high birth and great beauty, was endowed with abilities quite uncommon in a woman. She had received a man's education, and possessed a natural bravery and courage which placed her really above her sex. For the same reason she found it difficult, even as a girl, to form great intimacies with women. Their ideas were so narrow, and their thoughts and conversation so commonplace! Procopius, as soon as she was old enough, determined to find her an eligible husband, and fixed on Nebridius, treasurer of the Emperor Theodosius, and for some time Prefect of Constantinople. This choice was very agreeable to Olympias, who both loved and respected him. Their marriage was celebrated with the greatest magnificence, and many eminent bishops were present on the occasion.

St. Gregory of Nazianzen was prevented by having a bad fit of the gout, but a letter from him is still extant, expressing his deep regret at this *contretemps*, and calling her 'his dearly beloved spiritual child.' He says, 'he shall be with them in spirit, uniting their hands and hearts before the altar of God;' and adds a poem to Olympias on the duties of married life. Among other precepts laid down for her in this letter are the following:—

'In the first place, honour God; then respect your husband as the eye of your life, for he is to direct your conduct and actions. Love only him; make him your joy and your comfort. Take care never to give him any occasion of offence or disgust. Yield to him in his anger; comfort and assist him in his cares, his pains, and his afflictions, speaking to him with sweetness and tenderness, and winning him by gentleness into the paths of Divine love. Never let his weaknesses be the subject of your reproaches, and conceal them as far as you can from the eyes of strangers. It can never be just or allowable for you to expose to others the faults of one whom you ought to prefer to the whole world.'

How many homes would be free from domestic jars were these words more often remembered! This happy event took place at the end of the year 384; and Olympias tasted to the full that intense earthly happiness which a well-assorted marriage alone can give. But God was jealous of His spouse. He wished her to be wholly His; and so He merely let her touch with her lips the cup of human joy before He dashed it from her hand for evermore. Nebridius died suddenly only twenty months after their marriage; and Olympias was left, in the full pride of her youth and beauty, to face the world alone.

How she bore these first months of misery we do not know. Her biographer passes lightly over her sorrow to come at once to the first trial of her widowhood—the general impression that she must retrieve the misfortune which had befallen her, by a second marriage. The Emperor Theodosius selected, as Nebridius' successor, a Spaniard named Elpidius, a man of high birth and character and a relation of his own. But Olympias answered respectfully though firmly, 'that had God wished her to remain a wife, He would not have taken Nebridius from her; that it was evidently His will that she should henceforth serve Him in continence and holy fear; and that nothing should induce her to marry again.' The Emperor, indignant at her refusal, and finding her deaf to his remonstrances and entreaties, resolved to try what severity would do to bring her to reason, and ordered her whole estates to be confiscated and put under the guardianship of the Prefect of Constantinople, who executed his orders with such severity that she was in want of almost the necessaries of life. He kept her also a close prisoner in her house, forbidding her to go to church or to see the most illustrious of her friends, including the bishops who had been her only comfort in her great sorrow. But the Emperor little guessed the character of this young girl, whom he thought to crush by ill-treatment, and thereby quickly drive into compliance with his wishes. Olympias wrote him a letter, of which the following is a short translation:—

'Most mighty Emperor,—You have shown towards your unworthy servant a wisdom and a goodness not only worthy of a sovereign, but of a bishop, in relieving her of the heavy burden of riches, and of the consequent anxiety as to their proper distribution. But you would make me still happier if you would order the sale of the

whole, and have the produce distributed between the Church and the poor. For I have always dreaded lest a feeling of vanity should mix itself up with my distribution of these temporal goods with which God has entrusted me; and I likewise fear lest the snare of earthly riches should make me neglect those which alone are real, because they are divine and eternal.'

Theodosius was so struck with the piety and generosity of this letter, that, having returned from a successful expedition against Maximinius, and discovered how heroically and patiently the poor young widow had borne the cruel persecution she had undergone, he at once restored to her both her liberty and her estates, and ever after treated her with the greatest respect and consideration.

Olympias, being once more free to follow the leadings of God's Spirit and of her own conscience, drew up for herself a rule of life, in which it is difficult to know which most to admire, the courage with which she crushed out of herself the least remains of self-indulgence, or the humility and simplicity which clothed all her actions with a purity of intention as rare as it was admirable in the sight of God and men. She was naturally of a very delicate constitution, and her health had been weakened and enervated by the extreme luxury of her early training, when she had been accustomed to every kind of softness and self-indulgence.

This was the first thing she set herself to work to correct; and she did so with an unflinching bravery which speedily reduced her body to the state of one half dead. She entirely conquered her natural inclinations as regarded eating, drinking, and sleeping, so that all species of food became indifferent to her. She rarely touched meat, and in fact took barely sufficient food to

support life. And as sleep is the general result of eating, so in mastering the one sense she overcame the other. She accustomed herself by degrees to passing whole nights without going to bed at all, so that watching became as natural to her as sleep to others. St. Chrysostom, speaking of this period of her life, says her conduct was the more admirable because she had no one about her to set her the example, and no one to instruct or encourage her in this narrow road of habitual mortification; for Nectarius, who had succeeded St. Gregory Nazianzen in the see of Constantinople, was the last person to help her to attain to perfection in this manner.

Yet no feelings of vanity or self-complacency ever seemed to arise in her heart in consequence of the strange and austere life she had begun secretly to lead. She had no thought of self whatever, and this appeared in all her ways and actions. The simplicity of her dress, her straightforward and earnest conversation, her overflowing charity and inconceivable liberality—each and all were an index of a soul raised above earthly things and fixed solely on Him to whom she had devoted her young life; so much so that St. Chrysostom speaks of her 'as being "above the virgins," inasmuch as having tasted all the joys of life, she had of her own free will relinquished all for Christ, and by her eminent virtues, great austerities, and overflowing almsdeeds had won a higher crown than even that of virginity.'

St. Chrysostom likewise adds that 'he admired more the unstudied carelessness of her dress and of her shoes than even the poverty of her clothes;' justly remarking that 'no woman of her position could have arrived at that perfect indifference as to her personal appearance without having trampled under foot all human respect, and being absorbed in the things of God:'

Her gentleness was proverbial; no one ever heard a harsh or uncharitable word escape her, no matter how great the provocation. Yet she passed her days in continual feelings of compunction and sorrow for what she termed the sins of her past life. Prayer was her delight —her occupation, we may say, her very existence. She rarely left the church but to occupy herself in works of charity. She submitted herself to all men for the love of God, treating all bishops and ecclesiastics with special veneration. She spent her days in consoling the sorrowful, visiting the sick, teaching the orphans, caring for the widows, instructing the ignorant, and confirming the lukewarm in the faith. Her tenderness and gentleness endeared her to all and softened the hardest hearts, while her patience proved from what source she derived her perseverance in all virtue. The devil, to whom her good works were insupportable, raised every kind of storm against her, and at one time overwhelmed her with persecutions and temptations. St. Chrysostom, writing to her later, says, 'You have every reason to rejoice and to praise God because from the hour you became a widow you have never been free from sorrow, persecutions, and afflictions; in other words, you hav always walked in a path crowned with laurels for eternity. For God, who loves you with a special love, has permitted you to be perpetually under the cloud of some trouble. Either you have suffered from bodily sickness and infirmities more difficult to bear patiently than a thousand deaths; or you have been subjected to cruel injustice, misrepresentation, and wrong from your family, from the State, from those even whom you had overwhelmed with benefits. Never have you been free from some annoyance or other; and you may say with the psalmist that "tears have been your meat day and

night." Yet you know well that every one of these afflictions is to your soul as an untold treasure; and that you are thereby heaping up riches for eternal life. You are treading in *His* path, the path of the cross, so that by suffering with Him you may reign with Him and rejoice in His presence for evermore.'

Such eminent virtues in one so young, so beautiful, and in so high a position of life, attracted the admiration and veneration of the most eminent men of her age and country. Nectarius, who was Archbishop of Constantinople from 381 to 397, created her deaconess of his church, and consulted her on all affairs of importance in his diocese. Her clearness of judgment, and the penetration with which she unravelled the most difficult and intricate questions, made her advice perfectly invaluable to him. Palladius, Bishop of Helenopolis in Bithynia, who wrote an epitome of her life, says, 'Let not my readers think my words exaggerated if I speak of this wonderful woman, for really all expressions fail me when I think of her, and when I recollect her angelic life, her overflowing charity, and the humility which could make her see nothing but imperfection in what filled us all with shame, remorse, and compunction, when we compared our unmortified, self-indulgent lives with hers. She was like a precious vase filled with the Holy Spirit of God, and bore untold sufferings and persecutions with a fortitude which I can only compare to a rock continually buffeted and beaten by sea and storms. I knew her intimately —perhaps more intimately than any one—and what I relate is what I saw with my own eyes, during many years of constant intercourse. I never left her presence without thanking God who had given so much grace to so frail a form.'

The other Palladius, from whom we gather many

details of the persecutions she endured on behalf of St. Chrysostom, says 'that by her science and her labours for the cause of God and His Church she should rather be considered as a man than a woman, having none of the weaknesses or imperfections of her sex.'

St. Amphilochius, Archbishop of Iconia, writing to Seleucius, begs him to 'salute from him his aunt Olympias, who is a living image of purity and holiness, a model of piety, and one who in her own person is a perfect type of the faith which worketh by love.'

St. Epiphanius, St. Peter of Sebaste, Optimus, the Metropolitan of Antioch in Pisidia, and a multitude of other holy and learned men eagerly cultivated her acquaintance and kept up a constant correspondence with her, which tended much both to the promotion of God's glory and the good of souls. Optimus sent for her on his death-bed, and she had the consolation of nursing him in his last illness, and finally closing his eyes. St. Gregory of Nyssa was also one of her most intimate friends, and dedicated to her his book on the Canticles. In the preface he speaks of 'the joy with which he had received her request for an explanation from him of the mysteries of this wonderful book; that it was a wish worthy of one whose mind was as pure and holy as hers; but that he had written the commentary less for her benefit than for that of others, being persuaded that, purified as she was from the dross of earthly passions and desires, she had already fully conceived and entered into the beauty and Divine light emanating from every page of this Canticle of Canticles, and that no feeble words of his could add to her knowledge of the treasures it contained.'

But Olympias was soon to have a great support and joy in the guidance of one whom above all others she loved

and respected. In 398 Nectarius died, and was succeeded in the See of Constantinople by St. John Chrysostom. Born at Antioch in 344, this eminent man was the only son and heir of Secundus, Master of the Horse and Commander-in-Chief of the imperial forces in Syria. His father dying early, he was brought up by his mother Arethusa, who, left thus a widow at only twenty years of age, devoted herself entirely to works of piety and the education of her son. Her conduct in this respect was so admirable that a celebrated Pagan sophist, who was St. John Chrysostom's master, exclaimed one day, 'What wonderful women those Christians have!'

Arethusa provided her son with the most able masters which the empire could afford; but she laboured still more to instil into him the most perfect maxims of piety and contempt of the world. John studied eloquence under Libanius, the most famous orator of that age, and soon excelled his master. Libanius being asked on his death-bed 'who should succeed him in his professorial chair?' replied, 'There is but one who is worthy, John Chrysostom. But the Christians have stolen him from us!' On a previous occasion, John having to address a large assembly of orators, Libanius pronounced his discourse 'truly admirable,' and added 'that the Emperors were likewise happy to reign at a time when the world was possessed of so great a treasure.' The first dignities in the empire were open to John, and he began his career by pleading at the bar. But being led thereby into worldly habits and conversation, he became alarmed at the precipice on the brink of which he stood, and seriously entering into himself, resolved to renounce the world, and devote himself henceforth solely and entirely to the service of Christ. In subduing his passions he found nothing so difficult as to overcome his feelings of vain-

glory, which had been fostered by the admiration openly expressed on every side of his great talents. This he resolved to crush by embracing voluntarily every species of humiliation, in dress, in habits, in speaking—in fact, in his whole mode of life. In vain his friends, who were incensed at his leaving them, pursued him with ridicule and invective. John had deliberately chosen his path, and nothing could make him look back after he had put his hand to the plough.

St. Meletius, Bishop of Antioch, called him to the service of his church and ordained him reader. John devoted himself to learning the art of silence with as much pains as he had before that of speaking. And despite his wonderful eloquence and extraordinary fluency of speech, he ever after was noted in company for his modest silence, looking upon talkativeness as an enemy to interior recollection, and the source of many sins and indiscretions. He had a great friend named Basil, with whom alone he conversed freely on spiritual things. This friend was soon after made Bishop of Ruphanea, near Antioch, and on this occasion, John, being then twenty-six years old, wrote him his six incomparable books on the 'Priesthood.'

Four years after, Chrysostom retired into the mountains near Antioch, and there lived with certain holy anchorites, whose days and nights were devoted to the study of the Holy Scripture, penance, and prayer. They always closed their evening devotions with a meditation on the last judgment, in order to excite in themselves a constant watchfulness and preparation for the hour of death; a practice ever after strongly recommended by St. Chrysostom to all Christians at their evening examination. He spent six years in this solitude, when, his health having suffered exceedingly, he

was recalled by Meletius to Antioch and ordained Priest and Vicar-General, with a special commission to preach to the people, being then forty-three years of age. He discharged these arduous functions for twelve years, being the bishop's right hand, the father of the poor, and the instrument for the conversion of thousands of souls. The whole face of the city was changed. Nothing could withstand the force, eloquence, and zeal with which he preached. His reputation was spread over all the East; and Nectarius dying, the Emperor Arcadius fixed upon him to fill the vacant Patriarchate of Constantinople. But fearing a sedition at Antioch should his removal become known, he sent a confidential officer of his household to manage the affair by stratagem. This Count repaired accordingly to Antioch, and begged the saint, a few days after, to accompany him out of the city under pretence of visiting the tombs of the martyrs. John went with him, nothing doubting, when he found himself suddenly kidnapped, put into a carriage, and conveyed with all speed to the Imperial City. All remonstrances were useless, and St. John Chrysostom found himself consecrated Archbishop on February 26, 398.

This event caused great joy to Olympias, and the holy Archbishop was not long in discovering the treasure which God had given him in the devout deaconess, who set so noble an example to the women around her. For Constantinople at that time was very much what London is now, the hotbed of luxury and vice; and St. Chrysostom's first efforts were directed to trying to reform the habits of the women of high birth, who by their immodesty of dress and flippancy of conduct gave such scandal to those around them. Addressing the young girls especially with the burning eloquence which was habitual to him, after anathematising their painted

cheeks and hair dyed gold-colour, he exclaims, 'You seem to have forgotten that clothing is the covering and consequence of the sin of our first parents, and should be made a subject of penance rather than of vanity. But by the way you go unclothed in public assemblies, you behave worse than women of bad character. You allege that you never invite men to sin; you may not do it by your tongue, but you do it by your uncovered necks and shoulders more effectually than you could by your voice. When you have made another to sin in his heart, how dare you think yourselves innocent? Tell me whom do the judges punish—those who drink the poison, or those who prepare the fatal draught? You have mingled the execrable cup, you have administered the potion of death; and you are more criminal than the poisoners, for you murder not the body, but the soul. Nor do you do this to your enemies, nor compelled by necessity, nor provoked by any injury, but simply out of intense vanity and pride. You sport yourselves in the ruin of men's souls, and then you say you mean no harm!!'

These vigorous exhortations had an immense effect on the gay world of Constantinople, and in his crusade against these fashionable vices he was ably seconded by Olympias, who by her gentle admonitions won over many to the cause of modesty and decency. She had a succession of little conferences in her house of ladies of her own class, in which, without attempting to preach or dictate to those around her, she persuaded them by her tender lovingkindness to join her in various good and charitable works, inducing the young widows especially to devote themselves to lives of penance, retirement, almsdeeds, and devotion. Many of these, by her advice, placed themselves under the direction of St. Chrysostom,

among whom were Salvina, Procula, and Pantadia, the widow of Timasus, who had been the Emperor's Prime Minister, and whom St. Chrysostom made deaconess at her request.

It is impossible to conceive how much good was effected by the influence and the daily life of this noble woman, whose whole existence was an apostolate, and who seemed to live but for one end, the glory of God and the good of souls. But St. Chrysostom found it necessary to advise her to moderate her excessive charities, finding that in many cases they were abused, and fearing that even so enormous a fortune as hers could not long stand the profusion with which she dispensed it in every quarter of the globe. He wrote to her, therefore, as follows :—

'I praise and admire the fervour of your charity, but to be a perfect dispenser of God's gifts great wisdom is required. You must not encourage the indolence of many who live upon you unnecessarily. It is like throwing your money into the sea. You consider you have made an entire oblation of your earthly riches to the service of Christ's poor; therefore you must look upon yourself no longer as the possessor of your own fortune, but as its administrator, and for that administration you will have to give a strict account; therefore regulate your charities according to the real needs of your clients, and not according to the simple dictates of your over-generous heart. By this means you will husband your resources for greater needs, relieve more actual suffering, and receive from God a reward not only in proportion to your charity, but to your wisdom and discretion in its distribution.'

A counsel tempered with such kindness and sound common sense was not lost upon Olympias, who followed

his advice to the letter, and reaped the benefit of his greater experience in after years.

But he consented to allow her to have the care of his table, which was frugal in the extreme, for his charities had reduced him to great poverty, and he had sold all the rich and beautiful furniture which had been left by Nectarius, and even, on one occasion of a great public famine, had melted down the sacred vessels to give the proceeds to his starving flock.

About this time he entrusted Olympias with the charge of a certain number of widows and young virgins, whom he called her 'army,' because she taught them to fight valiantly against the world, the flesh, and the devil. She established them in a little convent near the church, and trained them to a life of devotion, penance, and charity, which made them the edification of the whole city. To those who found it difficult to imitate her in her constant watchings and vigils, she would quote the words of her 'great master,' as she called St. Chrysostom: 'Artisans watch to earn money, and soldiers as sentries; and cannot you do as much to praise God?' An orphanage was attached to this little convent, with a home for sick and incurables; and all seemed for a time to prosper in her hands. But God gave her this little interval of calm to prepare her and strengthen her for still heavier trials.

In the year 401 the celebrated monks of Nitria, whom Theophilus of Alexandria had unjustly turned out of their monastery, came to plead their cause at Constantinople, and were received and hospitably entertained by Olympias, who prepared a house for their reception and defrayed all the expenses of their maintenance. Theophilus, already incensed against her because she had refused him several sums of money which his

cupidity had endeavoured to extract from her well-known liberality, burst out into the bitterest invectives against her for this charitable reception of those whom he termed his greatest enemies. But this was as the distant growling of the thunder, which presages a coming storm. The Empress Eudoxia, who, after the disgrace of Eutropius, governed her husband and the whole empire, took violent offence against St. John Chrysostom because he had preached a fresh sermon on woman's dress, which she chose to consider as levelled against herself. There were not wanting enemies to blow the coals. Knowing that Theophilus was no friend to the holy patriarch, she sent for him to assist her in her meditated revenge, and Theophilus lost no time in obeying the summons. They got together a packed council at Chalcedon, calling themselves the Synod of the Oak, and proceeded formally to depose the holy patriarch on certain absurd charges which they could not prove. The Emperor was persuaded to issue an order for his banishment, but the people surrounded the church and would not suffer the officers to approach him. Thereupon St. John Chrysostom made them a farewell sermon, in which he used those beautiful words, 'I always say, O Lord, may Thy will be done; not what this or that creature wills, but what it shall please Thee to appoint, that I shall do and suffer with joy.' On the third day, fearful of a sedition among the citizens, he surrendered himself secretly to one of the officers, who conducted him privately into Bithynia. The next night the city was shaken by a violent earthquake, and part of it destroyed. The Empress, horribly frightened and stung with remorse, rushed to the Emperor, exclaiming, 'Unless John be recalled our empire is undone;' and instantly despatched letters that same night to recall him, protesting her innocence

of the plot laid against him. Almost all the city went out to meet him with lighted torches and banners. He stopped, however, in the suburbs, refusing to enter the city till he had been publicly declared innocent of the charge laid against him. But the people would not brook any delay; the enemies of the saint fled in every direction, so that St. John Chrysostom returned quietly to his episcopal residence and resumed his functions.

The joy and thankfulness of Olympias and her holy band of virgins and widows may be imagined. But this fair weather did not last long. A silver statue of the Empress had been erected on a pillar outside the great church of St. Sophia, the dedication of which was accompanied by Pagan shows, which, besides disturbing the faithful in their devotions, led to every description of extravagant folly and superstition.

St. Chrysostom had always inveighed against these public pageants; and on this occasion, fearful lest his silence should be construed into approbation, he spoke out boldly, with his usual freedom and courage, against the whole thing. The vanity of the Empress again took offence, and her desires of revenge were implacable. She recalled his enemies. Theophilus durst not come, but sent three deputies. They again deposed the patriarch; he refused to forsake a church committed to him by God unless forcibly compelled to leave it. The Emperor sent troops to drive the people out of the churches on Holy Saturday, and the holy places were polluted with blood. St. John Chrysostom wrote to Pope Innocent, begging him to judge his cause, for no injustice could be more notorious. The Pope wrote instantly to justify our saint, and to order a council to be summoned before which his accusers should appear. But the Empress contrived to prevent its assembling. St. Chrysostom was suffered

to remain at Constantinople for two months after Easter. But on Thursday in Whitsun week the Emperor again issued an order for his banishment. He received it as he was finishing mass, and turning to his deacons said, 'Come, let us pray, and take leave of the angel of the church.' He took leave of his bishops, and then of his faithful deaconesses, among whom none was so broken-hearted as Olympias. She was the last person from whom he parted, and he did his utmost to cheer and comfort her, as she clung to his feet, which she watered with her tears. Addressing her and her faithful little band of widows, who were gathered together in the baptistery, he said, 'Listen to me, my children. I feel that my career is over, and that we shall never see one another again on earth. But there is one thing which I implore of you, and that is that you never lose your love or fidelity to the Church; and that if a bishop should be appointed with the consent of the Church and of the Bishop of Rome you will obey him in all things as you would have obeyed me. Of course, if my successor should be a schismatic, or one irregularly ordained, you are not bound to hold communion with him. But I leave my flock in God's hands. One more favour I ask of you, and that is, that wherever I may be you will remember me in your prayers.' The sobs of these faithful hearts was the only answer he received, as they threw themselves on their knees to implore his parting blessing.

It is impossible to exaggerate the sorrow which this event caused to Olympias; for not only did she lose him who had been her father and friend, and her greatest spiritual help and consolation, but she had the misery of seeing the fearful evils which came upon the Church in consequence of his expulsion. All the good he had endeavoured to do was set aside; all discipline and order

were at an end. The holiest bishops and priests were exiled, and men of infamous character put in their places. Those who continued faithful were punished with loss of goods, imprisonment, or banishment; so that many yielded from fear of consequences, and lost their souls to save their lives. Olympias was inconsolable at this state of things; and St. Chrysostom, with his intimate knowledge of her character, trembled for the effects on her health and spirits of this unlooked-for calamity.

He wrote to her regularly during his exile, and of these beautiful letters seventeen are still extant. Having been first conducted to Nicea in Bithynia, he wrote at once to assure her of his safety, and of his joy, in the midst of his tribulations, at being permitted to suffer something for Christ. He condoles with her on the terrible wounds of the Church, but bears witness that, 'in the midst of so natural a sorrow, she still refrained from anything like impatience or bitterness towards their enemies.' He wrote to her again from Cæsarea, though without mentioning his own illness or the hardships he had undergone during his captivity. But in the meantime she herself was enduring the most bitter persecution from the Prefect of Constantinople as well as from the bishop who had usurped St. Chrysostom's episcopal chair. The very night of the patriarch's exile, that is, on June 20, 404, a terrible fire destroyed the church of St. Sophia, together with the senate-house and several other public buildings. Accused of the crime, Olympias, after suffering a variety of insults, was dragged before Optatus, Prefect of Constantinople, who was a Pagan, to answer with her life the charge of having set fire to the church. Her answer was as wise as it was courageous:

'The life I have lived for so many years amongst you

must, I think, be a sufficient answer to the accusation you have brought against me; for a person who has spent large sums in building and restoring churches is not likely to be the one to destroy and burn them.' The prefect having insolently replied 'that he knew well enough what her life had been,' she answered 'that he had better at once abandon his position as judge, and take up that of accuser.' The prefect, having not a shadow of a proof or a witness of the crime of which he had tried to convict her, then changed his tone, and, addressing her in words of seeming gentleness, represented to her the folly of refusing to hold communion with Arsacius (the heretical bishop who had supplanted St. John Chrysostom), as well as the other ladies who were associated with her, assuring her that if she would only do this all further annoyance on the part of the government would cease.' To this Olympias replied, with great boldness, 'that having dragged her before his judgment-seat, in the face of all the people, to answer an infamous accusation which was a pure calumny, and which no one had attempted to prove, it was contrary to all law or justice to turn round and force her to answer a totally different question, and one which did not come within the jurisdiction of the civil courts. That she insisted on pleading her cause before the proper tribunal, and putting herself in the hands of a competent counsel. That if, contrary to the law, they wished to force her to hold communion with persons excommunicated by the Church, she could only make one answer, and that was an absolute refusal to do an act so contrary to the will of God.' The prefect, seeing that it was hopeless to attempt to shake her resolution, dismissed her on the plea that he would give her leave to seek advice of competent counsel.

Thus Olympias came out victorious from this great

trial, and was covered with the more glory, as the people loudly asserted her innocence and openly rejoiced at the discomfiture of her enemies. This was the fruit of the simple faith and courage with which she had always walked in the narrow way of God's commandments. She wrote a long account of it all to St. Chrysostom, who answered her in a letter full of congratulations and joy, exhorting her to be ready for any fresh persecution of the like nature if it should be God's will. This persecution was not long in coming; but, in the meantime, God sent her a different kind of trial in a severe illness, which brought her to the very gates of death. St. Chrysostom heard of it, and being most anxious for the health of one so dear to him on every account, wrote to insist upon her neglecting no remedies recommended by her physicians, and giving herself every possible indulgence, food, and rest until her strength should be completely re-established. He showed her also how sickness, though perhaps the greatest of human trials, is yet a time not of inaction, but of the highest merit; and calls it 'the school of all virtues and a true martyrdom.' He adds that it is a criminal impatience to wish for death to be freed from sufferings, which are a manifest token not of the anger, but of the love of God; but yet that she must use all human means to try and regain her strength. Olympias obeyed, and recovered by degrees from her dangerous sickness; but she pined for the spiritual consolations of which she had been so long deprived. In the meantime nothing could be more edifying than her daily life during these trying months. Shut up in her little apartment, from which she scarcely ever stirred, she yet was the sustainer of the weak, the guide of the strong, the instructor of the ignorant, the comforter of all perplexed and troubled souls. Not only

did she never relax in her first fervour, but she prevented the fall of many others, and strengthened them for the fight; while her example, her courageous endurance of suffering, and the love which beamed in all her actions were a more powerful incentive even than her words to induce others to tread in the path marked out by one so delicate and so apparently unequal to the struggle, yet so borne onwards and upwards by the grace of God as to be the support and mainstay of a whole city.

The town of Constantinople, however, was soon to lose the treasure it possessed; for on a renewed summons to hold communion with Arsacius she was forced to leave her home and her friends and take refuge in flight. But even in her compulsory exile her enemies pursued her, never leaving her in peace in any one place. Yet while all the world was praising her constancy and courage, she alone appeared insensible to her own merits, writing to St. Chrysostom in terms of such deep humility and utter discouragement that in his answer he does not hesitate openly to express his admiration of her conduct, and to show her the reasons why she should glory in the graces God had heaped upon her, and be full rather of joy and thankfulness than of sorrow. She was brought back to Constantinople in 405 in order to reappear before the prefect Optatus, who strove to compel her to hold communion with Arsacius; but he only met with the same refusal as before. Enraged at her obstinacy, he compelled her to pay a heavy fine of 200*l.* in gold to the imperial treasury, hoping thereby to shake her resolution; but she cared little for the loss of the money, except that it deprived her of the pleasure of assisting the poor as much as usual, and steadily declined to hold any intercourse with the heretical usurper of another's see. No sort of indignity was spared her

on this occasion: her goods were sold by public auction, she herself was dragged repeatedly before the court, insulted by the soldiers, her clothes torn from her body; while her servants took advantage of the public discredit into which she had fallen to rob and pillage her: and those on whom she had heaped the greatest benefits turned against her and overwhelmed her with calumnies and injuries. Yet she never lost her patience or her calm trust in God, accepting from His hand evil as well as good, and bearing cheerfully all the insults of men, as being permitted by Him for her greater sanctification. So much worry and sorrow, however, seriously affected her health, and after a time she felt herself almost too weak to struggle against such continued trials. She fell into a state of great discouragement and despondency; for even the saints have been allowed thus to sink and lose courage at times, in order to realise more fully the weakness of their own nature and that their only strength is derived from the free grace of God.

But our Lord did not allow His faithful servant to remain long in this state of misery and temptation to despair. St. Chrysostom wrote to her again; and his loving words of encouragement and praise brought back her wonted courage and hope. Arsacius at this time died, and Atticus was preferred by the court and placed in the patriarchal chair. The Pope refused to recognise his appointment, and sent five bishops to Constantinople to call a council, and insisted in the meantime that St. John Chrysostom should be restored to his see. But the bishops were cast into prison in Thrace, Atticus foreseeing that if the council were held he should be inevitably deposed. He proceeded to still greater acts of violence towards all those who had been friends of St. Chrysostom, and began by turning out the holy widows

and virgins whom Olympias had placed in the little convent near the church of St. Sophia, and dispersing them in different directions. Olympias had the grief of seeing this which had been her first religious foundation entirely destroyed, and her orphans and sick scattered to the four winds. Finding she could do no more good in Constantinople, she withdrew to Cyzicus, in the Hellespont, but was again compelled to change her abode by the intrigues of Atticus, and finally was ordered to remain on parole in a kind of honourable captivity at Nicomedia. It seemed as if nothing were to be wanting to perfect her in humility; for surely few things are more galling to human pride than to be perpetually interfered with, contrary to law and justice, and to feel your liberty fettered in every direction by an authority which it is impossible to recognise as anything but arbitrary and unjust, and yet to which you find yourself compelled to submit. The only possible way of bearing it is that adopted by our saint—that of never looking at the secondary cause, but always at the will of God, which, for reasons now hidden from our eyes, permits such tribulations and persecutions for the perfecting of our souls in His path, the path of the cross. Her future history can be gathered only from the letters of St. Chrysostom, which, as we have before said, he addressed to her regularly during his exile. Of the first three we have already given copious extracts. They are, in fact, less letters than essays on the motives which should induce her to receive her manifold afflictions with joy and thankfulness rather than despondency; and contain the most touching allusions to her charity, generosity, and courage. The succeeding epistles, giving as they do both the account of the sufferings of St. Chrysostom himself and of St. Olympias during

their compulsory exile, are translated almost literally here:—

From John Chrysostom to Olympias. A.D. 407.

'The rigour of the winter and the weakness of my health must not cause you so much anxiety. The winter has been severe, as it generally is in Armenia, but I really have not suffered much. I took every precaution: kept up a great fire in my room, which I never left, wrapped myself up in warm cloaks, and, in fact, neglected no means to keep myself well. It is rather wearisome certainly to be always shut up in four walls and never to be able to go out. But for that there is no remedy but patience.

'But what makes me really anxious is your own health. I entreat and implore of you as a personal favour to do everything you can to try and get stronger. Your illness is the consequence of all the afflictions you have undergone; and when I think that you are deprived where you are of all necessary comforts and of all good medical advice, I confess I am terribly afraid lest you should sink altogether. For the love of God, send for a good physician, and let him give you the remedies proper for your complaint. Last month I suffered from constant sickness and pains in the stomach, and the venerable Synclitium sent me a potion which cured me in three days. Pray ask him to send you the same. Do not fret at my being compelled to pass the winter at Cucusus. I am really better than I was last year; and if you would only take more care of yourself, I am convinced you also would enjoy better health. How is it that, in spite of all I have already written to you, you are still so overwhelmed with sadness that you only pray and wish for death? What can I say more to you than I

have already done on this subject? Yet, lest the multitude of your sorrows should have made you deaf to my representations, I will again repeat them to you; for I feel like the apostle, "To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not wearisome, but to you it is necessary."

'What shall I then say to you to-day? That there is nothing more glorious, Olympias, than patience in suffering. Patience is the queen of virtues, the most beautiful of all crowns. It requires much patience, indeed, to see oneself unjustly deprived of one's riches, driven from one's home and country, forced into exile in an unhealthy climate, thrown into prison, loaded with chains, overwhelmed with insults, raillery, and contempt. Even Jeremiah's calmness could not resist trials like these. Yet not even these sufferings, nor the loss of children, who may be as our very heart's blood, nor death itself, that most terrible of all evils in human estimation, are so trying to bear as bad health. I take the example of Job: deprived of his fortune, of his children (by a violent and unexpected death in the midst of a feast), of his flocks and herds, and all that he had, he yet had the courage to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." But when sickness came, and he found himself afflicted with a grievous ulcer, his patience failed: he wept, he lamented, he prayed for death. You see, then, that serious illness is the most unsupportable of all evils; and that in bearing it well we give the most heroic proofs of patience. The devil knows it perfectly. "Skin for skin," he said to God with regard to His faithful servant Job; "all that a man hath he will give for his life." And when grace had triumphed, and patience had been perfected in him, the devil, unable to invent any fresh trial, retreated in confusion.

'But do not think to justify yourself in wishing for death because Job did so under the like circumstances. Think of the times when he lived; the law had not yet been given to the Jews; the prophets had not yet appeared; above all, our Lord Jesus Christ had not yet poured out upon the world the abundance of His grace. Yes; of us more will be required than of Job. We have a harder strife, yet a more glorious victory. Listen to the words of our Lord: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." Therefore again I repeat, do not think there is no harm in praying for death; recollect the words of St. Paul: "Having a desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. . . . but *to abide still in the flesh is needful for you.*" The more your afflictions abound, the more you multiply your crowns; the longer the metal has been in the crucible, the greater the purity of the gold. Do not fancy either that I undervalue the magnitude of the struggle you have to undergo. No; your severe illness, incapacitating you, as it does, from all those works which are your delight, is the heaviest trial God could send you. But did not Lazarus reap thereby eternal life? Did it not open to him a place in Abraham's bosom? Yet we are not told that he did any great thing; he simply suffered patiently poverty, privations, and continued sickness. To the children of God suffering is the occasion of obtaining the greatest merits; to sinners it is a means of expiating their faults. That the just derive great advantages from suffering is proved by the example of St. Timothy, that holy and virtuous bishop, who yet was subject to continual sickness and infirmities. The apostle who could raise the dead, did not attempt to cure him, following therein the example given him by our Lord, who per-

mitted St. Paul himself to feel the "sting in the flesh," for which thing, he says, "he besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him," but our Lord replied to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for power is made perfect in infirmity." His petition was not granted, but he was made to understand the value and usefulness of his sufferings, and so a perfect calm filled his soul, and he learnt to rejoice in his tribulations. Think of all this, and recollect that, though you cannot leave your room, though you are compelled to keep your bed, you do not therefore lead an idle life—quite the reverse. Those whom the executioners torture and put to death suffer in reality less than you, for their torments are soon over; whereas you are never free from what you feel to be excessive, though inglorious pain. Once more, then, I beseech of you not to wish for death, but to accept your sufferings as a proof of God's love, and to do your utmost not to neglect the care of your body; your indifference to your health is culpable. If you are still in despair at our separation, take heart and believe that it will not be eternal. I do not say this merely to comfort you; I have a profound conviction that things will mend. Without speaking of all I suffered at Constantinople, you can fancy all I had to go through during that long and terrible journey, when I was constantly threatened with death; you can guess what I suffered after my departure from Cucusus, and during my sojourn in Armenia. Well, God has preserved me through it all; and I am now really in better health than I have been for many years. The Armenians are astonished that with my poor, thin, feeble body I can bear such intense cold and be able to breathe; whilst they, who are used to the climate, suffer so much. But all this time we have been free from accidents; and we have escaped out of the

hands of the brigands, who infest the whole country. At Constantinople I could not exist without my bath; now I am so strong that I do not feel the want of it. I used to be always ill when I took no exercise; now I am shut up in one room, full of smoke, and often without the necessaries of life, proper food, or attendance; and yet I am really better in health than I was when surrounded by everything which your loving care could suggest. Therefore, as I said before, banish your anxiety and fears on my account, and do not create to yourself imaginary miseries. I send you a little book which I have just written, and of which the title is, "That no one can hurt him who does not hurt himself." I want you to read it often, and even, if your health will allow it, out loud. As I am convinced that half your illness is caused by fretting, I want to hear that you have made an effort to overcome this sadness. You ask, "What can I do or say to console you?" Write and tell me you are really better, then I shall know that you have obeyed me and conquered your despair for my sake. Is it not a comfort to you to know that amidst all my worries I am yet so well? Ah, I assure you, our enemies are furious at it; so you ought to rejoice. Do not fancy we are abandoned and deprived of all human consolation. The sufferings we endure here are written in heaven. I was very much grieved at the fall of the monk Pelagius. When you see men so holy and so patient led away by error, think of the crowns reserved for those who fight courageously and faithfully to the end. May our good God fill you with all His consolations!'

A short time after he penned a fifth letter, which runs as follows:—

'Your troubles go on thickening day by day. The fury of your enemies increases, their anger knows no

bounds. Nevertheless be not discouraged, rather rejoice and let your heart thrill through and through with thankfulness. If you had not already dealt such heavy blows to the devil, he would have left you in peace. It is then a proof of your courage, and a pledge of your triumph, that he should renew his attack, and pour out the venom of his heart upon you in greater abundance. We have talked before of Job; even after Satan had overwhelmed him with corporal pains he added to his miseries the unkindness of his wife and of his friends, the bitter words of his servants, the contempt of all. The devil is always the same; but all these blows only serve to add to your riches and multiply your crowns. Look at the trees: if they grow in a very sheltered, shady place their wood becomes soft; but expose them to the vicissitudes of the season—the cold winds, and the summer suns—they ripen and strengthen, and bring forth abundance of flowers and fruit. It is like those who go on a long sea voyage. At first they are frightened and ill; but let them be exposed to storms and tempests, and be in danger of perishing, they acquire strength and courage, and can stand at the prow or on the poop without fear. Do not, then, let yourself be for a moment discouraged by the evils which fall so heavily upon you; with a firm will and your wonted energy you will overcome all the assaults of your enemies. Rejoice then, O pious Olympias! rejoice and be exceedingly glad; for great is your reward in heaven. Tread under foot the stings of your foes as you would crush the mud under your heel. Your afflictions come from the malice of men, which is evanescent; your reward comes from God; and who can measure the immensity of His mercies or the munificence of His gifts? Therefore, again I say, rejoice. Reassure me about your health, so as to fill my heart

with joy. You know that the only real consolation you can give me in my solitude is to know that you are feeling stronger. Farewell.'

His sixth letter is written after a serious illness which he had himself experienced :—

'I am come back from the very gates of death, and I am very glad that your servant did not arrive till I was out of danger, for I could not have deceived you, nor could I have written to you at a moment when I was struggling in the waves of so dangerous a sickness. The winter has been unusually severe; it brought on inflammation of the bowels, and I confess that death would have been less painful than the agony I endured for two months. I seemed to live only to suffer. Perpetually nailed to my bed, no remedy seemed to avail to mitigate the evil; everything seemed dark around me morning, noon, and night. I lit my fire, though suffocated with smoke. I put on additional clothes, but still nothing warmed me, and I suffered horribly; continual sickness, violent headache, loss of appetite, perpetual sleeplessness, such was my state. My nights were worse than my days, they seemed to me interminable. But why weary you with all these details? Thank God! I am now better. As soon as the spring came, and the climate changed, all the bad symptoms disappeared as if by magic. But I am compelled to be very careful, as you may suppose. I can only take the lightest food, a very little at a time, on account of my impaired digestion. But what has given me the most bitter grief has been to hear that you also have been at the point of death. My deep attachment towards you, the interest I have ever taken in all that concerns you, would not let me rest without more minute tidings than those contained in your letter. I wrote and sent letters of enquiry in every

direction, and now, thank God! better news has come, and I have received a letter in your own handwriting. What touches and rejoices me in this letter is the way you make light of all these afflictions, showing the incomparable courage which God has given you in the midst of such tribulations. The thought of you gives me wings. I forget my solitude, my sickness, and my many vexations. My heart is full of thankfulness and joy for you. I feel a pride in your grandeur of soul, not only for your own sake, but for that of the city of which you are the tower and the stay. Your noble conduct, your marvellous patience, are as an all-powerful voice, calling upon both sexes to be ready for the fight, to descend with courage into the arena, and to bear bravely the fatigues of the strife. How wonderful it is to think of! You never go into the town, you remain in your narrow room, and there in your little bed you encourage and strengthen a whole population!

'The waves rage furiously, your bark is tempest-tossed in the midst of shoals and reefs, and you go steadily on your way as if you were sailing on the calmest sea. It is neither the age nor the sex which ensures the victory, but the soul and the will. It is thus that women have won the martyr's palm when men have fallen short. Therefore are we filled with joy and consolation on your account. I cannot help repeating it, for the thought pursues me everywhere; and if my absence saddens you, surely it ought to be a consolation to you to think that the recollection of your patience and courage is a perpetual source of joy and thankfulness to me, makes me forget the distance which separates us, and fills me with a happiness which no outward circumstances can affect.'

He writes again from Cucusus:—

'Even in this wild and desert region I find the same

tender care, anxiety, and love that I did at Constantinople, and it touches me to the heart. Those who meet us, whether Orientals or Armenians, burst into tears, and follow us with their sympathy and their prayers. Therefore, you see, you are not the only one to afflict yourself for my sake, and that must be to you a powerful motive of consolation. Listen to what the prophet says of a different state of things, which he justly looks upon as an almost insupportable trial: "*And I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and I found none.*" Is it not then some compensation to find the whole world sharing in one's sorrow? And if you want a still greater cause of satisfaction it is this—after having suffered so much, I am well. Looking calmly back on all the afflictions and sorrows I have had to undergo, and the attacks of which I have been the object, my soul is still in perfect peace; and the recollection of past sufferings does nothing but enhance my thankfulness and my joy. Let your sadness for my sake disperse, then, as a morning cloud, and write to me more frequently, giving me every detail about yourself. I was disappointed at receiving no letter from you when I heard from my much-valued friend Arabius. Do not forget that everything here is transitory. "Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning." If the path be thorny and the gate narrow, still it is the way of life; it is only the broad road which leads to destruction. Try, then, and live more entirely above this world and above such strong human caring. Break through the links which still bind you to earth; shake your wings that you may mount fully upwards; and do not let them drag heavily in the smoke and dust of this weary world. When you see those men who have behaved so cruelly towards you

loaded with honours and dignities, say to yourself, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction;" and cease not to pray for them, to bewail their fate, to weep at their blindness and short-sightedness. The rich man in the Gospel lifts up his eyes in hell, being in torments, not only on account of his neglect of Lazarus, but also because in his prosperity he forgot God. Think of all these things, O faithful and pious Olympias! when your heart is inclined to yield to despondency, and write and tell me that my letters have consoled you. Then I shall have the more joy in continuing our correspondence, feeling that my poor words can pour some balm into your wounded heart.'

Again he writes from Nicea, in Bithynia:—

'Banish the fears which the thought of this fresh journey has caused you. Our guards have been only most anxious to spare me every fatigue, and to do everything in their power to show us that we are among friends, and not gaolers. We are carried along, as it were, over a tempestuous sea, and we fear no evil, for God is with us. My health is improved. The weather is beautiful, the air clear and pure, and our escort surround us with attentions and civilities. We do not want servants, for the soldiers anticipate all our wants. They are like a guard of honour, and each man seems to think it a privilege to be able to do something for us. Oh! that marvellous love and charity which God puts sometimes into people's hearts. The only trouble I have is that you do not write, and that I do not know how you are. You can send any amount of letters by Pergamus, who is the most sincere and devoted of friends, and who venerates your character and piety more than words can say. How doubly dear would he be to me if he brought me good tidings of you! . . .'

The next letter is dated from Cæsarea, in Cappadocia:—

'It is after having recovered from the serious illness which overtook me on my journey here that I write to you from Cæsarea itself. I had every possible care from the most eminent and tender physicians, whose affection and sympathy did me more good even than their remedies. One of them insisted on accompanying me on my journey, and nursed me with the most watchful care. You see, I keep you informed of all my proceedings, but you are not equally generous by me. I expected a letter from you from the brother of Bishop Maximus, but he told me you would not entrust one to him. Do not blame Tigrius or any one for not having followed me into exile. They wished it very much, but were not able to realise their desire. Glory be to God for all things! That is always my thought in every circumstance of life. My soul is in perfect peace; I am not only tranquil but joyful. Let me know if those who accompanied Bishop Cyriac have been set at liberty; I have had no certain information about them, and am anxious on their account. Write quickly, and may God be with you for ever!'

He writes again on his return to Cucusus:—

'At last I breathe freely. I see the light after the clouds and darkness which overwhelmed us during our compulsory journey. Now that the suffering is past, I am going to tell you what we had to go through. I was afraid of doing so before, fearing it would cause you too much sorrow. For more than thirty days I was consumed by a burning fever. In spite of that they compelled me to continue my journey. The most violent pains in the head and stomach added to my miseries, from which I had not a moment's reprieve. Then the roads were most rough and difficult; I had no doctor, no

possibility of taking a bath or any other remedy; we were in want of even the necessaries of life. The Isaurians harassed our little party, and threatened every moment to cut us to pieces. Add to this the impracticable nature of the track and the intense fatigue of those long stages, and you can form some idea of what we had to suffer. But all that is now past. Once arrived at Cucusus we found everything in abundance. Desert though the place may be, still the kindness and generosity of the people made them anticipate all our wants. Dioscorus sent to entreat me to make use of his house in preference to any other. I had similar offers from many others, but I could not refuse Dioscorus, and so I am lodged in his house. He has left his villa to come and see that we have every possible comfort and accommodation; and he has had a house built on purpose to preserve me from the severity of the winter; in fact, not even you could do more. I have, in consequence, speedily recovered both health and strength. Now, if I have told you all this, it is that you should try and use your best endeavours to prevent our being removed from hence if possible. If we were left free to choose our own dwelling-place or return to Constantinople, that would be another matter; but if we are to remain in exile we cannot be better than here. If they force me to make another painful journey it would bring me again to the gates of death. Therefore let not your affection fancy to ameliorate my position by trying to obtain for me a more eligible residence. Desert and distant as this place may be, it has this advantage above all others, that I am surrounded with warm friends and loving care which would probably fail me altogether elsewhere. The very first day of my arrival I met the pious deaconess Sabina, terribly broken and changed by all the hard-

ships she had undergone at an age when such journeys are not easily borne, but full of vigour and ardour. She was prepared to accompany me into Scythia when she heard I was to be brought here. She has established herself consequently in a little house hard by, and is quite determined to be wherever I am. The Church received her with the heartiest welcome. Constantius, that pious priest whom you know so well, has written to implore my leave to come and join me. He is living hidden in Constantinople, but said he did not dare start for Cucusus without my advice. Now, once more, I trust to your prudence and discretion as to my future dwelling-place. Try and find out with your usual wise caution what their intentions are regarding me. If they wish to remove me to Cyzicus, or Nicomedia, or any place near the sea, I would gladly accept such a proposition. But if, on the contrary, they wish to send me to a still more savage and distant country, do your utmost to ensure my remaining here. Nothing would be more trying or vexatious to me than that. But I leave all to your prudence and affection, knowing that you will do everything in your power to ascertain the intentions of my enemies, and as far as possible to circumvent them. In the meantime, believe that I am well and happy, and entirely resigned to whatever may be God's will.'

It seems that Olympias' efforts to bring him back into more civilised countries were unsuccessful, for a month later he writes again from Cucusus :—

'Why are you in such sorrow and despair? Have you not done your utmost to ameliorate my position? and if you have failed, is that a reason for such intolerable sadness? Do believe that I am content; the solitude is great, certainly; there is no market in the town; nothing is bought or sold, but provisions pour in

abundantly. The holy Bishop and Dioscorus seem to have no other thought or occupation than to overwhelm me with their gifts and care. Then as to what I suffered at Cæsarea, I assure you that since we were so ill-treated and driven out of that town all the world has turned in our favour. Their admiration and enthusiasm know no bounds. Do not say anything about it, but it is quite true that we endured the most cruel and inhuman treatment at their hands; but all this only added to our crown. It has all been an occasion of merit for me, and I hope thereby to have expiated some of my many faults.

'We were on our way into Cappadocia, having escaped out of the hands of Galatius, who was always threatening us with death, and people came and told me that the Bishop Pharetrius was anxiously expecting me, and only desirous to do everything in his power to be agreeable to me. I doubted this very much; however, it was more politic to pretend to believe it. Well, I arrived at Cæsarea, horribly ill with a tertiary fever, and really at the point of death; I could get no succour of any sort. We were lodged in a little house at the extreme end of the town, and deprived of the most ordinary necessaries of life. At the same time the Isaurians were pillaging all the country in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea, and the people began to fear that their town itself would not be secure from the ravages of these brigands. Pharetrius never came near me; but one morning, as I was in vain endeavouring to get some rest after a terribly feverish night, a whole body of monks, inspired by him, attacked our house and threatened to burn it to the ground if we did not instantly depart. Neither the danger we ran from the brigands without, nor my own state of serious illness, had the slightest effect in touching

their hearts. Their fury was such that even the soldiers were afraid of them. The prefect himself came to try and protect us, but his entreaties were of no avail with the monks. He did not know what to advise us to do—between the brigands without and the rabid monks within. He then went to Bishop Pharetrius to implore him to check their audacity and to spare me, at any rate, while I was so very ill. His words availed nothing, and not a priest dared come forward boldly and appear on our side. What was to be done? It was then twelve o'clock; the fury of the monks redoubled; they vowed they would force me to go—alive or dead. So at last I desired a litter to be prepared, and, throwing myself into it, I was carried out of the town amidst the tears and groans of the whole population. Some of the priests followed me in secret, saying, "Go, for the love of God! Depend upon it, you are safer even among the brigands than amidst the emissaries of Pharetrius." A very virtuous and pious lady named Seleucia (the wife of Rufinus) came out to meet me, and implored me to accept the offer of her country house, situated about five miles from Cæsarea. She sent her servants to prepare everything for our reception, and I accepted her offer and took refuge in her house. But the malice of our enemies did not end there. Pharetrius threatened her with every sort of violence if I did not at once leave her villa. She came to see me, and never said a word of the threatening notices she had received. But she told her steward and desired him to summon all the labourers on the estate to defend me in case the monks attacked the house. To me she only renewed her entreaties that I would remain there and give her the joy and consolation of ministering to my wants, assuring me that the house was fortified and impregnable, and that neither bishop

nor monks could harm me there. I was in utter ignorance, therefore, of the plot hatching against me.

'In the middle of the night, however, the poor lady came to tell me that the brigands were at our door. She did not dare let me know the persecution she had undergone for my sake. The priest Evethius woke me, crying out, "For the love of God, fly! the enemy is upon us." It was midnight; there was no moon; our escort had fled. I got up and ordered torches to be lit to prepare for our flight. But Evethius put them out, saying they would only attract the enemy. So we started in the pitchy darkness. I could not ride, and was compelled to get again into my litter. The road was steep and stony. The mule which bore my litter fell, rolling me over with him, and I was on the point of perishing. I got up and crawled on with the utmost difficulty. Evethius got off his horse and led me by the hand, and so conducted, or rather dragged, we continued our flight. The roads were frightful, and the mountains so steep that I could hardly get on at all. You can fancy what I suffered that night, the fever being still so strongly upon me that I had not the strength of a little child. Oh! the fright and fatigue of that journey. My private belief is that all this persecution arose from the jealousy of Pharetrius. When I first arrived at Cæsarea all the principal men of the city came out to meet me, and overwhelmed me with courtesy and kindness. This wounded Pharetrius, who expected I should be treated as a disgraced exile; and from that moment he vowed a revenge which he had no difficulty in executing. But, as I said before, all this is past, and I look upon it as a grand treasure which I possess henceforth, and which no man can take from me. I invite you, then, to rejoice with me; yes, I implore of you to bless and praise God

that He has considered me worthy of such sufferings. But keep all these details to yourself, although I doubt not the soldiers will publish them, for they nearly lost their lives also. Now I am well and rapidly recovering my strength; do not fear that I shall suffer too much from the cold. Dioscorus has prepared a charming little house for me, and has not neglected anything which could contribute to my warmth and comfort. The climate resembles that of Antioch, and is just now warm and delightful. Rest satisfied, then, on my account. I assure you I fear the brigands far less than the bishops! How is it that you have never received my three last letters? I sent the last by your own servant, and it was of a nature to console you and to cure you of your sadness on my account. After all, I have always said, and shall never cease saying, that the only real evil is sin; all the rest is but ashes and smoke. Is it such a calamity to be in prison and loaded with chains? Is it a misfortune to suffer, when suffering brings with it such enormous blessings?

'And death—it is a debt we all must pay to Nature some time or other. Exile—what is it but to be sent to see a variety of different towns and countries? Confiscation of goods—why, it is only another word for liberty and independence! Now I am going to give you two or three important commissions which I trust to your prudence and zeal to execute with all possible despatch. Do everything you can to save the Bishop Maruthas, for I need him sadly for the affairs of Persia. Try and find out from him what success he has had in his mission. If he is afraid to write himself, let him tell me the result through you. Do not delay a day in trying to see him about this business; I confide in your zeal. But now for another matter. The monks Marses and Gothus, in

whose house the holy Bishop Serapion was concealed, have seen the deacon Moduarius. He told them of the death of Unilas, that admirable bishop whom I ordained not long ago, and sent to work among the Goths. He did wonders for God during his episcopate. Moduarius brought me a letter from the King of the Goths, asking for a fresh bishop. As matters now stand, I see but one course possible, and that is—*delay*. It would be impossible for them to cross the Bosphorus in this season; therefore try and make the bad weather an excuse for deferring the appointment. Neglect no means for this end. I attach the greatest importance to it. There are two things which I dread above all things, and which I pray to God to avert—I should not wish the new bishop to be nominated by him who has been the cause of all the Church's evils; and that all the more as he has no real power or authority to do so; and I should not like them to choose the first comer for so important an episcopate. You know that they would not be anxious to select a good man, and you also know too well what would be the consequences of their choice. Try, then, and do all you can to avoid such a misfortune for the Church. What would be best would be if Moduarius could come secretly to see me; but if that be impossible, do all you can yourself. Remember the widow in the Gospel and the two mites. She had given more than all, for she had given all she had. In the same way, if you give all your zeal, intelligence, and prudence to these affairs, even if you should not be successful, you will have nothing with which to reproach yourself, but, on the contrary, will merit an eternal recompense. I thank Bishop Hilary from my heart for his letter. He has asked my permission to return to his church, where he hopes to be able to arrange matters. His presence is most useful to us at this

moment, for he is a man full of piety, constancy, and zeal. I send you a letter for him, which please take care to deliver into his own hands, either by means of Helladius or some person of equal trust and confidence. All these matters I gladly leave in your hands, knowing that no one will execute them with greater fidelity and prudence than yourself.'

But these letters are drawing to an end, for the term of his sufferings was nigh at hand. He wrote from Arabissa in 406:—

'From the hour of your widowhood, you have trampled under foot human respect, you have overcome all human pride, you have been filled with the wisdom which is from above, and yet you expected to lead a life free from struggles, storms, and tempests! But that was impossible. When men are engaged in mortal combat, either in the arena or the battle-fields, what wounds do they not receive! And you, who have waged war against all the powers, all the principalities, all the rulers of the darkness of this world, all spiritual wickedness in high places—could you expect to escape unscathed? Let nothing, therefore, trouble or affright you. I know well that you count as nothing the confiscation of your goods, the exile from your home, the outrages to which you have been subjected from the basest and vilest of mankind. And so I write to you as St. Paul writes to his Hebrew converts: "But call to mind the former days, wherein, being illuminated, you endured a great fight of afflictions, and on the one hand indeed by reproaches and tribulations were made a gazing-stock, and on the other became companions of them that were used in such sort."

'What is the use of writing you a long letter? When we address the successful warrior it is only to celebrate

his courage and load him with praises. Now, knowing the wisdom and bravery you have shown in the midst of such tribulations, we can only praise, and admire, and rejoice with you.

'You complain that I have been a long time without writing; it is true, but a fresh illness has been the cause. Not that medical care has been wanting, but it has been impossible to get medicines or food, and we have been threatened with both famine and pestilence. The cause of all these misfortunes has been the incursions of the barbarians, who have blocked up all the roads, and prevented any kind of provisions from reaching the town. Also the roads are unsafe for all travellers. Andronicus was stripped in bringing me your letter, and with difficulty escaped out of their hands. Therefore I conjure you send no more of your people here at this moment, lest they should fall victims to these barbarians. Only give me, if you can, some tidings of your health. I much fear that the persecutions you have lately undergone have brought back a return of your illness. Still, remember how great a grace is attached to the bearing patiently bodily infirmities. I have often told you that Job and Lazarus thereby won their eternal crowns. As for me I cannot cease, in spite of all, to call you "blessed." The patience and dignity with which you have borne all your tribulations, the prudence and sagacity with which you have managed the most delicate affairs, and the charity which has made you throw a veil over all the malice of your persecutors have won for you a glory and a recompense which hereafter will make all your sufferings appear light and transitory in presence of your eternal joy.'

The last letter extant is dated once more from Cucusus:—

'Believe me that your continual trials have only

strengthened and fortified your soul. Such are the effects of adversity when it falls on a magnanimous, generous nature. As gold is purified in the crucible, so affliction increases the brilliancy and purity of the chosen vessels of our Lord. Therefore St. Paul says, "But we glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope." Now, though I often pray to our Lord to deliver you from trouble, and though I thereby fulfil the evangelical precept of praying that you may not enter into temptation, still I confess I do so in fear, knowing the treasures that your pure soul derives from these sufferings. After all, with what evil can they threaten you, which you have not undergone already? You have this advantage, that you have literally nothing new to suffer. Notwithstanding your extreme delicacy of body, which is like a spider's web, you laugh at your weakness as if you were the strongest of men; so much so that your enemies gnash their teeth with rage at seeing all their weapons against you fail. Therefore I cannot help looking upon you as thrice blessed, and thanking God all day long on your behalf. Rejoice then and be exceeding glad, and think of yourself as one who has gained as glorious a victory as those who have perished in prison or under the most terrible tortures. Only weep and lament for the authors of all these miseries, that they may repent before it be too late and the door be for ever closed. You ask me for tidings of my health; I am better; but I own I dread the winter, which is so trying to my delicate stomach. However, all that must be as God wills. May God ever have you in His holy keeping! Adieu.'

St. Chrysostom's prognostications were fulfilled. With the return of winter his illness came back with

greater force; and his enemies, seeing that the whole world was determined to honour and defend him, resolved on his death.[1] For this purpose they procured an order from the Emperor, that he should be removed to Arabissus and thence to Pytine, a town situated on the Euxine Sea, near Colchis, at the extremity of the empire, on the frontier of the country of the Sarmatians, the most barbarous of all the Scythian tribes. Two officers were ordered to drag him there in a limited number of days, over very rough roads, with a promise of promotion if, by hard usage, he died in their hands. One of them was not altogether destitute of humanity, but the other was a perfect fiend. They made him travel in the scorching heat, from which his head, which was quite bald, suffered exceedingly. In the most violent rains they forced him out of doors, obliging him to travel till the water ran in streams down his neck and bosom. When they arrived at Comana Pontica, in Cappadocia, he was very ill; but his tormentors hurried him on five or six miles further to the chapel in which lay the relics of the martyr St. Basiliscus. The saint was lodged in the oratory of the priest. In the night the holy martyr appeared to him and said, 'Be of good courage, Brother John; to-morrow we shall be together.' The confessor was filled with joy at this news, and begged that he might stay there till eleven o'clock. This made the guards drag him out even more violently. But when they had travelled four miles, perceiving him to be really dying, they brought him back to the oratory. He there changed all his clothes to his very shoes and put on his best attire, which was all white, as if he meant it for his heavenly nuptials. He was yet fasting, and, having received the

[1] This account of his death is derived from the *Lives of the Saints*, by the Rev. Alban Butler.

Holy Sacrament, he poured forth his last prayer, which he closed with his usual doxology, 'Glory be to God for all things.' Having said 'Amen,' and signed himself with the sign of the cross, he calmly gave up his soul to God on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14, having been archbishop nine years and almost seven months.

Thus ended a life so precious to the Church of God, so doubly dear to his spiritual children. To Olympias the loss must have been aggravated by the cruelty of the means employed to bring it about; and the bitter feeling that, to the last, no justice had been done to so great a saint, and that all her efforts to bring about his restoration to his see had been ineffectual. But she was sustained in this sorrow, as in all others, by her entire submission to the will of God; and had the additional comfort of feeling that at last he was free from struggle and pain, and had won his eternal crown. Of her future history we know but very little. She remained for many years in her exile at Nicomedia, where she was never free from persecutions and trials of various kinds, all of which she bore with heroic courage and patience.

It is certain that she was dead in 420, when Palladius, writing her panegyric, says: 'This noble woman, who had trodden under foot all human considerations to devote herself to the service of God and His Church, deserved to be reckoned among the confessors, for her innocence was continually exposed to the most cruel misrepresentations and calumnies, and she may be said to have given her very life for the cause of our Lord. She died amidst great bodily sufferings, but with confidence and joy, trusting in the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has promised an eternal reward to those who have suffered much for His name's sake.'

Nicephorus said that 'she had become so celebrated for her extraordinary virtues that her very name was considered worthy of imitation, parents hoping that their children would be built up on the like model.' He adds that 'it is the duty of every one to publish her history and make known the details of her life.' It seems that she had one consolation before her death; *i.e.* the restoration of the peace of the Church at Constantinople, and the consequent reopening of her convent, which at her death she entrusted to a relation named Marina, imploring her to maintain the rule in its primitive poverty and simplicity. She died at Nicomedia after a long and painful illness, borne with heroic patience and courage, and a complete abandonment of herself to the Divine will. Her body was afterwards transported to Constantinople and interred in the monastery she had built. The Greeks keep her festival on July 25, but the Roman martyrology on December 17.

I cannot better conclude this slight sketch of this noble and admirable lady than by giving my readers a portion of an exhortation addressed by St. Chrysostom, at the request of St. Olympias, to a widowed friend of hers who was inconsolable at the loss of her husband, and which is equally applicable to all who are called upon to bear a similar sorrow. He writes:—

'The state of widowhood appears to be one of despair and misery; but it is rather one of dignity, honour, and glory. It is more a crown than a disgrace. For though a widow has no longer one who loves her more than all the world, and converses with her daily, yet she has our Lord Jesus Christ for her Spouse. He Himself honours her with His intimacy and preserves her from the dangers with which her lonely life is beset. When a widow suffers persecution and injustice from men, she

has but to throw herself at His feet to tell Him all; to weep and pray before Him, and He will guard her from the snares and malice of her enemies. Prayers and tears, these are the arms of widows with which they can defy men and demons. A widow, being relieved from many duties incumbent upon her during the lifetime of her husband, has nothing to do now but to devote herself to God, to her children, and to the poor. She must ever aim upwards. If you tell me that the state of widowhood was formerly reckoned one of ignominy, I reply that death likewise was formerly looked upon as a curse; but now as an honour and a glory, especially if suffered for the cause of God and His Church. The condition of widows I consider as one of equal dignity with the virgins and martyrs, and their fidelity will obtain a like crown. . . . But you say that your husband's presence caused you to be universally respected, and prevented your being despised and contemned by the great ones of this world. But is it possible that you can attach any importance to the ephemeral judgment of men? You are anxious and troubled about your children; there is no one to provide for them, no one to help you in their education; their position in the world will be quite different from what it would have been had their father lived. All this may be true in one sense, but listen to me for a moment. Who gave you these children, save our Lord? Who ordained that they should be left thus early fatherless? Who has called Himself the Father of the orphans? If they should be less esteemed by the world, believe that they will be all the more precious in the sight of God. If they have a humbler position here below, if no servant or officer run before them to clear their path, yet angels watch their steps. It is in your power to enroll them in a more noble army

than that of the Emperor—in the army of the King of Heaven, where the victory is to the meek and humble in heart, who will be crowned with more splendour than the most illustrious of kings. What does God say to the Israelites through His prophet Isaiah? "I will turn away My eyes from you, and when you multiply prayer I will not hear. You judge not for the fatherless, and the widow's cause cometh not before you." Therefore take heart all ye who are "widows indeed and desolate." Greater is He that is for you than those that are against you. Again I repeat to you, your state is one honoured by the Church, looked upon with love by the angels, above all, approved of by our Lord, who has promised to be henceforth your Spouse. Give yourselves, then, wholly to Him in almsdeeds, in charity, in humility, in penance, in prayer. Do not think you can safely neglect any of these things. *Thoroughly* deny yourself; live only for God, and for those around you. And thus you will make my joy complete, for your progress is my only desire.'

How fully St. Olympias had entered into the spirit of St. Chrysostom's direction to widows the preceding pages will have shown; and her life may be fitly summed up in the stirring words of the old English poet—

So be ours the Faith that saveth,
Hope that every trial braveth,
Love that to the end endureth,
And, through Christ, the crown secureth.

DONNE.

D.

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